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BRITISH AUTHORS.

VOL. 864.

THE RACE FOR WEALTH

BY

F. G. TRAFFORD (Mrs. J. H. RIDDELL).

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE

RACE FOR WEALTH.

A NOVEL.

BY

F. G. TRAFFORD (MRS. J. H. RIDDELL),

AUTHOR OF "GEORGE GEITH."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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THE RACE FOR WEALTH.

CHAPTER I.

Due East.

MANY years ago, in the dull cold light of a February afternoon, a stranger in London wended his way Due East through the city.

He was very young; he was very hopeful; he was very confident of himself; very sanguine as to his own future; he had entered the great Metropolis not an hour before, with the intention of conquering it, if such an expression be sufficiently intelligible; in the pages that are to come will be found the tale of his failures and his successes, of his faults and virtues, of his errors and repentance. Whatever of interest this book may contain will be centered in him and his; and for all these reasons it is fitting that the story which has still to be written should commence as he sets foot in London for the first time, and follow his steps till the chronicle is ended, and the volume closed.

It is a strange home which he is seeking; a singular locality in which he is about to pitch his tent — East, due East, in the Christian Babylon, in that great city whose inhabitants are as the sands of the seashore.

Will you trace his route on paper, most courteous reader? The way is not hard to find, even although

your knowledge of London extend no further east than Gracechurch Street.

Perhaps, however, it is assuming too much to imagine that you can know anything of a street which is always full of vans and omnibuses; probably you have merely a vague recollection that the landmark I have chosen is somewhere in the city. Let me, therefore, refresh your memory as to its whereabouts.

From Charing Cross east you will find (if you consult a Directory map) a continuous line of streets running parallel with the river for a distance of a couple of miles or so; thus, commencing at the point above indicated, and marking out the way, child-fashion, with the tip of your finger, you have first the Strand; secondly, Fleet Street; thirdly, Ludgate Hill and Ludgate Street; then a sweep round St. Paul's; after that Cannon Street, the handsomest thoroughfare in London, though it *is* in the City; while, at the extreme end of Cannon Street, comes King William Street, which we cross at the statue, and which brings us at once into Gracechurch Street.

Were we to continue our route up it, we should, in due time, get into a truly delectable neighbourhood, bordered on the right by Spitalfields and Bethnal Green, and on the left by that strange land lying to the north of Barbican, and all round about Moor Lane, and Curtain Road. As it is, however, we turn our faces southward, and speak more fully of the territory in which we find ourselves.

Down there you perceive, slanting to the river, is Fish Street Hill, at the bottom of which runs Lower Thames Street, a classic spot rendered sacred by Billingsgate, in which men knock up against the passers-

by, with big baskets of fish and bigger boxes of oranges; where the air is literally foul with the smell of foreign fruits, for in Lower Thames Street oranges are more plentiful even than salt haddocks, and the side paths are lined with open shops, that seem overflowing into the dirty gutters, with nuts, and shaddocks, and lemons.

Yes, my dear madam, it is indeed from Thames Street, by Billingsgate, that many of the fruits you have at dessert, and the delicate lemons wherewith you season your puddings, are originally procured; it is from Thames Street that the cod-liver oil which the great Doctor Belgravia declares your consumptive daughter must either take or die, is to be had in its integrity; it is from Thames Street that the lemon and lime juice which you find so valuable in a sick room, make their way into genteel society; and it is from Thames Street that the bloaters the Londoners eat at breakfast, and the oysters they swallow for supper, and the salmon milor has at a fabulous price per pound, and the turbot you order from your suburban fishmonger, are all had "first hand," as it is called.

Prawns, shrimps, soles, mackerel, salmon, trout, sturgeon, whelks, winkles, are all brought to Billingsgate — are all sold from Billingsgate — and scattered north, east, south, and west, on marble slabs, or costermongers' barrows, from whence they find their way to the dinner-table of his grace the duke, and to the four-o'clock tea of the housekeepers who live high up, next the sky, in city attics.

The piles of salt herrings and cart-loads of oranges, the great flabby cod-fish, and the equally sickly-looking "forbidden fruit," are enough to make one loathe the

sight of food for a month — to say nothing of the dirty women and the drunken men, the elfish children and the shouting fishwives, the boys who will persecute one to buy flag baskets, and the respectable-looking old gentlemen who are racing to the railway station, carrying to-morrow's first course, in one of those identical baskets, home; the narrowness of the foot-paths, and the everlasting jamming-up of carts, and the swearing of the drivers, and the filth, and the misery, and the ecstasy of the street Arabs, and the pushing and elbowing required to force a passage through the impatient crowd! — verily, dear reader, this is a strange place in which we find ourselves — this Babel where the Easterns congregate together to cheat the Westerns if they can.

Leaving behind us Billingsgate, however, and proceeding eastward along Lower Thames Street, we get into a still worse atmosphere — into a locality redolent, not of oranges and haddocks, lemons and fresh soles, but of salt fish and rotten vegetables, and decomposing heads and tails.

Peep up that narrow street, or rather lane, for it is paved over the horseway, and opposite neighbours might shake hands from the top-story windows; do not turn up it, for your nose' sake, but look up it, and try to imagine in what business the inhabitants can be engaged.

Through those basement windows whiffs of a terrible odour are wafted to the sense; glimpses are to be caught of baskets piled high, one upon another. You stand and look, and look again, and yet you are unable to tell me, as I am unable to tell you, what manner of men carry on business in this vile-smelling lane, with

a sweet-sounding name — which swarms with children — where the gutters are full — where the air is foul — where fish warehouses abound — where the poor congregate together — where it almost seems as though human and animal life were striving together to produce a pestilence.

And yet the men and the women who have their homes here do not die quicker than their wealthier fellows; further, they love London, and would not go to live in the country at any price. They like to get among the green fields up about the New River and Hornsey Wood House on a fine Sunday in summer, or to go down the Thames as far as Woolwich or Gravesend, or to make their way down to the marshes beyond Plaistow when the proper season arrives; but it would break their hearts to leave the city, for all that.

There are very strange anomalies to be met with in this region, and it may be that some of the *gamins* in Lower Thames Street love the smell of fish and sewage as you who live far away in the country love the perfume of the rose and the hawthorn. They may, when they grow to manhood's estate, have as tender memories awakened in their hearts by the odour of a stale mackerel or the sight of a mildewed orange, as are aroused in other breasts by the scent of the jessamine or the gift of a bunch of pale bluebells.

Spite of this possibility, however, it can scarcely be considered high treason to repeat the fact that the majority of the lanes, alleys, courts, and entries debouching into, and leading out of Lower Thames Street do stand grievously in need of a thorough purification.

I wonder if in this respect the East End be better or worse than in the days when all this neigh-

to give a stranger a favourable impression of the Metropolis, but Lawrence Barbour knows no better than to proceed straight through Shadwell to his destination. He is in no haste to reach that destination, which was the reason he elected to walk, instead of proceeding thither in a cab. The February wind is keen and cutting, the pavements are not over clean, the streets are not over dry, the evening is beginning to close, and the long night is drawing on the short winter day. The neighbourhood in which he soon finds himself is neither interesting, nor respectable, yet still he never quickens his steps, but, the first excitement of entering London over, walks on more slowly than ever, thinking of the great future that lies before him: of how fine a thing it is to be free at last to carve out his way in the world, at liberty to earn his own living, — to make his own fortune.

Hard and fierce had been the battle between the Barbour pride and the Barbour poverty, before he was suffered to try what he could do for the relief of the family necessities in business. The Barbours were great people, or, at least, they thought themselves so, and Mr. Barbour shed natural tears at the idea of one of his sons demeaning himself by entering trade.

When Lawrence first mooted the question, his father desired him never to mention such a project again; but, as the Barbour poverty became greater, Lawrence did recur to the matter, time after time, until at length he wrung a reluctant consent from the old "Squire," as he was styled, "to drag the Barbour crest into the mire of commerce," — so Mr. Barbour put it.

"I should like better to drag the Barbour crest out of the mire of beggary," Lawrence answered stoutly,

whereupon the old man declared, "That he was not a Barbour at all, that he was a Perkins, that he had cast back to the only low drop of blood which had ever entered into the veins of the Barbours since" —

"Since the first of our name trimmed the beard of William the Conqueror, I suppose," interrupted Lawrence; then noticing the angry flush that came into his father's cheeks, he went on, —

"What does our family do for us now? What is the use of blood without money? What is the good of birth unless a man have gold also? What is the use of being a gentleman if one cannot stoop without losing caste? I thought it was only parvenus who needed to be cautious about going on foot. Anyhow, I am certain of one thing, that no pride of birth will fill a man's stomach, and it is coming to want with us. I do not desire to run counter to your prejudices, but I will not stay here and starve."

"You are not asked to starve: your godfather wishes you to enter the Church."

"If I must be a beggar, I should certainly prefer not to be a clerical one," was the reply.

"And I have offered you time after time to write to my old friend Sir Charles Harrison, who would, I am sure, obtain a commission for you," went on Mr. Barbour.

"Could I live on an ensign's pay?" was the retort. "Could I live like a gentleman on an income no larger than a clerk's? Could I spend my life considering sixpences, and planning how best to keep out of debt? Look here, sir," and Lawrence laid his hand resolutely on the table; he did not strike it, because he was not at all of a vehement [illegible]

hand down resolutely. "Look here, sir, I mean to leave home the day I am one-and-twenty. Shall I waste the year between this and that, or shall I go out and make money now? I will adopt either course you please; only tell me whether I am to stay or not, and let us argue no more about the matter."

Then the old man, looking away towards Mallingford End, towards the house, and the trees, and the lands, and the park that were his no longer, answered, —

"You shall choose your own future, Lawrence; you shall select your own road in life; and then whatever harm comes to you, will not be of my making; you may go into the Church, or the Army, or to London, or —"

Mr. Barbour's temper was getting the better of his parental feelings, so he prudently stopped short, and Lawrence replied, —

"I will go to London."

"Very well," said his father; "only, should you repent hereafter, do not blame me."

"I am willing to take my life on my own shoulders, and carry whatever burden I make for myself," was the reply. "Thank you, sir;" and the young man's tone grew softer, and he put out his hand a little way, as if expecting his father to do likewise.

But Mr. Barbour answered, —

"There can be no unanimity of feeling between us in this matter. As you have decided to disgrace the family, be it so; only you can scarcely expect me to shake hands, and wish you God speed on such an errand."

Before Lawrence started for London, however, his

father relented so far as to hope he would do well and keep well.

"And remember," were his last words, "while I live you can come home when you please. I will not shut the door on you, though you have disappointed me. Notwithstanding your low tastes, I have no reason to doubt your being my son." Having concluded which speech, Mr. Barbour turned back to the son who remained, while Lawrence walked out a prodigal into the world.

CHAPTER II.

Distaff Yard.

THUS it came about that the young man entered London as described in the first sentence of this story, and walked Due East to the residence of the only relative he had in the whole of that great city, said relative chancing to be connected with him in manner, and fashion following: —

When the Barbours were really the Barbours of Mallingford End — wealthy county people with horses in their stables, rare exotics in their greenhouses, deer in their park, servants at their beck and call — Stafford Barbour, Lawrence's great-grandfather, married a Miss Perkins, daughter and heiress of Isaac Perkins, Drysalter, Crutched-friars, London.

The lady had plenty of money, which was in due time spent by her sons, Lawrence's grandfather being one of those who assisted in wasting the golden hoard.

All the gold Isaac Perkins had scraped together in the course of a long and industrious life took to itself

wings and fled away, when the young Barbours came to lay hands upon it. Mrs. Stafford Barbour's fortune proved indeed a perfect curse to her descendants. On the strength of it they gambled, they betted, they trained horses that always lost, they purchased pictures — they married aristocratic paupers.

From the time Mr. Stafford Barbour brought home his bride, the race down hill began, and that race was only finished outside the gates of Mallingford End, when, ruined and soured, Augustus Barbour, esquire, widower, and the father of two sons, found himself with nothing intervening between his pride and the workhouse, save a modest homestead and a farm of some fifty acres, which having fortunately been settled on his late wife and her children, afforded a shelter, albeit an humble one, to the gentleman beggar in his extremity.

Had Mr. Barbour been a man possessed of one single strong quality excepting pride, he might still have done something with even the little territory which was left; as it was, however, he and his boys only lived, and but for the kindness of the rector and his curate, who, out of pure compassion, taught the lads gratuitously, Lawrence and his brother would have grown up totally uneducated.

All the day long, Mr. Barbour wandered round his land, or sat over the fire, reading books of heraldry, and those county histories which contained any mention of the former greatness of his family, and of the high people who had intermarried with the Barbours of Mallingford End. All the day the boys either studied or ran wild, whichever they pleased — Edmund Barbour generally inclining to the latter amusement, while

Lawrence pored over his lessons, and thought and thought, till he was tired and weary, of the properties his ancestors had once owned, but which they now owned no more.

When the crisis of their affairs was publicly known there came a letter to Mr. Barbour from a very distant connection of the family — a certain Mr. Josiah Perkins — who, dating from Distaff Court, John Street, Limehouse, stated first the fact that he might be considered in the light of a relation, inasmuch as his father and Mr. Barbour had been third cousins; secondly, that having heard of the reverse of fortune experienced by Mr. Barbour, he thought it possible he might wish to put one of his sons to business; lastly, that if such should be the case, he, Josiah Perkins, could make room for a boy in his office, and would do his best to push him on in the world.

Mr. Josiah Perkins further proceeded to explain that he was a manufacturing chemist; that he lived on his own premises; that the boy could live with him on those premises.

Moreover — and Mr. Perkins evidently considered this the moral feather in his cap — his partner, Mr. Sondes, had a separate business altogether — to wit, a large sugar-refinery in Goodman's Fields.

It was a very straightforward epistle; the letter evidently of an honest, well-meaning man, who knew nothing of the world — as Mr. Barbour understood the meaning of the phrase — who looked upon the "smash-up" at Mallingford End as he would have looked upon the bankruptcy of any very wealthy merchant, and who, having been all his life rather proud of the relationship

existing between himself and the Barbours, felt that as a matter of gratitude for the satisfaction the connection had afforded him, he ought now to step forward and offer to do something for the family.

How this letter was received may easily be imagined. Mr. Barbour anathematised every Perkins who had ever existed since the beginning of time. He cursed his great-grandfather and his great-grandmother, and the drysalter and trade, and the city and Mr. Sondes, and Mr. Josiah Perkins, and all chemists and all sugar-refiners, and all presumptuous business blackguards who had the impudence to thrust their confounded shop-keeping under his very nose.

By dint of actual abuse he made the contents of the letter so public that Lawrence, whom he did not intend to see it, could have repeated the substance of the epistle off by heart.

Nay, he did more; he took upon himself to answer the proposal, which his father said he should treat with silent contempt, and at the age of sixteen entered into a clandestine correspondence with his relative, which never dropped, until four years afterwards the young man entered London, and wended his way due east to Distaff Court.

There was nothing romantic about Lawrence Barbour — nothing specially hard in the fact of his coming to London to seek his fortune. Money he had never owned; luxuries he had never known; good society he had never mixed in; and yet in so far as he had the prejudices of his class on many subjects, as he had not been born among business people, as he had not been trained to work, as he had never known what it was

to call any man master, as he had not been brought up to labour, there was a something rather interesting in seeing how willingly he submitted to the curse of our race; how almost triumphantly he stepped forward and thrust his neck into the world's collar; how bravely he faced the fact that the choice he had made would harness him for life to the business car — would take him away from the hunters and the racers and the wild steeds of the desert, and turn him into a cart-horse, a drudge, a worker, till he had earned his rest, and was turned out, for the remainder of his days, into that green paddock, which is the *Ultima Thule* of so many merchants, and tradesmen.

It was growing dark when Lawrence Barbour found himself in High Street, Shadwell; but the gas-lights and the not over-reputable crowd that kept surging past amused his country eyes. There is a great charm in the gas-light; the London streets at night — that is, the streets where there are plenty of shops, which are full of the stir, and hum, and excitement of life — must always have a charm for a stranger. Take even the lowest neighbourhoods — take Whitechapel and Shoreditch, and the Hackney and Bethnal Green Roads, St. John's Road Hoxton, John Street Clerkenwell, the Goswell Road, in fact any thoroughfare where the gas flames out from the butchers', and grocers', and drapers', and jewellers' shops — it would be impossible for a person new to London to pass through those streets without feeling both astonished and interested — astonished at the stream of human beings that flow ceaselessly along the pavements, interested by the light, and the bustle, and the life, and the unwonted of the great city in which he finds himself.

once it occurred to Lawrence that he might as well see how time was going; and accordingly he felt for his watch, but the watch was no longer in his possession. His chain dangled uselessly over his waistcoat; it had been cut, and the one solitary article of value the young man owned in the world was probably on its way to the nearest receiver's.

For a moment Lawrence stood still and looked back. He had some vague intention of retracing his steps — of tracking out the thief; but that instant the vastness of London came home to his understanding; the hopelessness of seeking for one man among millions of men was made plain to him, and at precisely the same minute there crossed his mind a doubt whether he should find the road to fortune so smooth a one as he had in his inexperience imagined it would prove.

He had come to London to conquer it, to make money out of its inhabitants, to earn a place for himself among the merchant princes of the Modern Babylon. He had walked along building castles and dreaming dreams, and, behold! a hand had dexterously appropriated the one possession on which he prided himself, the one thing his mother had left him — a jewelled and most valuable watch.

Somehow he did not enjoy his walk so much after this little incident, and he enjoyed it all the less, perhaps, because he soon found himself in that end of the Commercial Road which is wide and dark and desolate by reason of its blocks of respectable houses that show few gas-lights, and all stand back disdainfully from the pavement. On till he came to Three-Colt Street, down which he turned; — ten minutes more brought

him to John Street, where an errand-boy obligingly informed him where Distaff Yard was situated.

"It's inside that there gateway," remarked the juvenile Londoner, "and if you ring at this here door somebody will come to you."

Having imparted which piece of intelligence the lad went off, swinging his basket, and whistling, "So you're going far away," which was at that time a popular melody, in the streets, as well as in the drawing-room.

Lawrence rang, and in a short time the door opened, and a man demanded his business.

"Is Mr. Perkins in?" asked the descendant of all the Barbours; whereupon the other answered that he believed he was, and that if he, Mr. Barbour, would sit down in the counting-house, Mr. Perkins should be informed he was "wanted."

As matters turned out, Mr. Perkins was in the counting-house, and there Lawrence found him seated on a high stool, engaged in looking over a file of accounts for some receipt or memorandum which he needed.

"What can I do for you, sir" asked the chemist, pausing in his employment, and turning round to survey the new-comer, while he kept his fingers between the bills examined, — and the bills on the lower part of the file — a man of business in the minutest action of his life!

"I am Lawrence Barbour," was the reply.

"Bless my soul, you don't say so!"

Mr. Perkins doubled up one of the receipts to

shook his kinsman's hand till Lawrence's fingers ached again.

"Welcome to Limehouse!" and Mr. Perkins, still holding the youth's hand, stepped back a step, or two, so as to get a better view of his face.

If the two had then spoken their thoughts, Mr. Perkins would have said,

"Well, I don't think much of the look of you;" and Lawrence would have echoed his words.

They were both disappointed. The chemist had expected to see a dashing young swell — a tall, handsome fellow — enter Distaff Yard; and when he turned round on his stool it no more entered into his mind that Lawrence Barbour was his expected cousin than that he was a prince of the blood.

He had rather boasted about this cousin to his business acquaintances. He had expected to find something above the common in a Barbour of Mallingford End, and now there stood before him a middle-sized young man, with lank black hair, with a pale face, with irregular features, with deep-set eyes, who talked with a slight country accent, and who had not the slightest pretension to being a fine gentleman.

Mr. Perkins did feel disappointed, but this disappointment made no difference in the heartiness of his welcome.

"I am right glad to see you," he said. "I hope you will make your fortune before you are as old as I am."

Lawrence, in his heart, hoped so, too; but he only thanked his cousin for his good wishes, and for his kindness in offering him a situation.

"Nonsense, lad," was the reply. "I mean to have

my value out of you yet. But now, come along, and let me introduce you to my wife and children;" and saying this, Mr. Perkins led the way out of his office and across the yard into the house, which was for a time to be Lawrence Barbour's home.

CHAPTER III.

At Home.

TAKEN as a whole, Mr. Perkins' career had not been an astonishingly prosperous one. He had not done ill — but neither, on the other hand, had he done well.

Success is comparative, consequently men's views of it are different. Some are satisfied with a very small measure, others deem their object still unattained even when the bushel is full and running over.

Success to one is a living of five hundred a year, with a pretty church to preach in, pleasant society near at hand, no poor, and a good house; to another, it is a fair salary, a semi-detached villa, a strip of garden containing a piece of grass about the size of a table-cloth, a piano purchased by instalments, standing behind the door in the front parlour, a suite of walnut wood furniture covered with green rep, a dining-table, a set of spirit-decanters, and a cruet-frame, with various other articles too numerous to mention dispersed about the suburban mansion.

To a third, success is compassed when he has got his sons out in the world, and his daughters married or engaged. Up to that point there may have been a

struggle, but for the future he sees his way plain, and binds the laurels of victory round his brow; while to a fourth nothing short of a title seems satisfactory, nothing under a patent of nobility worth striving for.

Success is what we make it for ourselves. The result of the social game, whether gain or loss, must depend, not on the opinions of others, but upon the magnitude of the stake that we have placed upon the board: and, therefore, when I say that Mr. Perkins' prosperity had been of the most moderate description, it must be borne in mind that I am gauging his condition by the ordinary conventional standard, rather than speaking of it as Mr. Perkins might often be heard speaking of it himself.

According to his own idea, he stood before the world a living example of the comfortable position any individual willing to work hard, may achieve without the assistance of a large money capital to start with. Lawrence Barbour's notion was, however, widely different to this. Mr. Perkins became in due time a living example to him of how long a man may walk through existence without making anything of his opportunities; and, allowing for the over-hopefulness of youth, for its impatience at delay, for its proneness to ignore the possibility either of failure or obstacle, Lawrence's view of the matter was sensible enough. There can be no doubt that, had not Mr. Perkins been so easily contented his success would have been greater; but then, he might not have felt so happy. So there are two sides to that question also.

He had worked hard — like a horse in a mill,

he was wont to declare, when he talked about himself, a calamity of not unfrequent occurrence. He had not been extravagant, he had not been ostentatious, he had not squandered his earnings; and yet, supposing Josiah Perkins had died, his estate would not have yielded five thousand pounds net. Is this success? Mr. Perkins thought so, and was a very well-contented man; who never had any qualms of conscience as to the honesty of the trade in which he had embarked; who never, or at least rarely, regretted having left the more legitimate branches of his profession in order to engage in others which were, to use a mild term, questionable.

As the world goes, Josiah Perkins was a just and an honest man, and yet his trade was a lie, his business a delusion, every article he sent out of his yard a sham. Never a better fellow breathed than the manufacturing chemist; he stood by his friends, he loved his wife and children, he never forsook the people he employed when sickness or death entered their doors; but still, as I have said, his mode of earning money was not strictly legitimate, for Mr. Perkins was less a manufacturing chemist than a manufacturing grocer.

Had he not, however, been in the first instance a chemist, he could not as the years went by have turned grocer.

Science, experience, practical knowledge, all these were brought to bear — not on perfecting valuable discoveries, but on producing all sorts of rubbish. Nutmegs that had never seen a foreign shore; coffee-berries that had never grown on a tree; arrow-root extracted from potatoes; rhubarb useless as a medicine; pepper-corns made out of molasses and pea-flour; these

were a few of the articles manufactured in Distaff Yard, and distributed thence throughout the length and breadth of England.

Doubtless there is no such thing as adulteration now; our tea is all from China; there is no starch in our ground rice; our raisins are not besmeared with molasses; our vinegar is free from all suspicion of pyroligneous acid; no trace of barytes can be detected in calomel; the bark of the alder-tree is never decocted into quinine; glass flies are not sold for genuine cantharides; all the wine made in England is labelled "British," and would not dream of appearing at table in cut decanters, still less of being solemnly poured into coloured and frosted glasses by stately footmen;—everything men and women eat and drink now, is, of course, pure, and there are no profits made illegitimately at this present time; but in the days when Mr. Perkins did business due east, matters were differently managed; some chemists did not profess to be particular, and their customers were less particular still.

If the grocers did well, the chemists did well too; if wages were good, and the poor flocked for little luxuries to the cheap shop in the main street — ay, and for that matter to the dear shops, too — Mr. Perkin's share of profits was satisfactory.

If, on the contrary, coffees, and spices, and farinaceous articles were not in demand, the half-year's balance in Distaff Yard was a thing to be wept over.

What would ye have, reader? The world is not all honest. There is knavery in the innocent country, as well as due east in London.

When in a facetious and confidential mood, Mr.

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bour was not the person to let obstacles affright him, to permit small discomforts to influence his decision.

"My house it not quite so grand a one as Mallingford End," remarked Mr. Perkins, as he led the way towards his modest residence.

"It is a long time since we lived at Mallingford End," answered Lawrence, "and I did not expect to find a palace in Distaff Yard."

This reply, not being exactly the kind of observation Mr. Perkins expected, caused him to take rather a curious look back at his relative who followed him into the house, which was not much bigger than a good-sized packing-case.

"I hope, notwithstanding, you'll make yourself at home," said the chemist, hanging up his hat in the hall and motioning Lawrence to do the same; and as he spoke he drew open a door to the right of the passage, and introduced the new-comer to his family.

Then for a moment Lawrence did receive a shock: such a small room, such a large family, such a paper, such furniture! He could scarcely help showing in his face some part of what was passing through his mind, and Mr. Perkins consequently volunteered the remark, that though the house wasn't a castle, still they were heartily glad to see him in it, and would do their best to make him comfortable.

"And when you've made your fortune and have got Mallingford End back again, we will all go down and see you there, and talk about the night you first came to our little crib in Distaff Yard."

Lawrence Barbour laughed; the secret desire of his soul was to buy Mallingford End; but he was

not going to proclaim that fact among these strange people.

"I have a notion," he answered, "that though the losing of Mallingford was an easy matter, it would prove a more difficult affair to get the property back again. At any rate, that is not one of the tasks I have set myself," and he shook hands with Mrs. Perkins, and, the civility seeming to be expected of him, kissed a variety of children who were seated round the table, each with a cup of weak tea beside it, and a wedge of thick bread-and-butter in its hand.

"Make yourself at home," Mr. Perkins repeated, and Lawrence accordingly essayed to perform this feat by "drawing up to the table," as Mrs. Perkins begged him to do, and accepting a cup of tea from her fair hands.

Let me try to sketch that interior as it appeared to the stranger's eyes.

A small room containing a large table, which left bare space for a dozen mahogany chairs, and a sofa covered with horse-hair; there was an old-fashioned grate piled high with blazing coals; there were two windows, draped with faded crimson curtains; there were Mr. Perkins in his office-coat, brown in parts with coffee, white in others with bean-flour, Mrs. Perkins, in a dark stuff dress, and five children, arrayed according to their age and sex in garments curiously fashioned, and evidently home-made — evidently, by reason of the bagginess of the nether habiliments of the little boys, and of the generally patchy appearance of the dresses of the girls. No one, looking even for the first time at the delft tea-service, at the children, and at Mrs. Perkins, could doubt the fact of the mistress

of that household being a "capital manager," who had in a cheap sempstress, who affected char-woman, who washed at home, who liked grubbing in the kitchen, who locked up even the mustard-pot, and who, having a general idea that success or ruin hung on the saving or using of an extra pound of sugar a week, tried to do her duty, according to her light, faithfully.

While she was engaged in pouring out his tea, Lawrence employed himself in wondering where on earth Mr. Perkins had picked her up, and when he had exhausted his astonishment on that subject, he directed his attention to the eldest child, a girl of ten, who, seated opposite to him, was staring with all her might at the new arrival.

Miss Ada Perkins was one of those young ladies who would seem to be in great demand in creation, since nature turns them off by thousands; she was fair, she was fat, she had a broad face, a small *nez retroussé*, — not piquant in the least, but simply flat at the bridge and turned up towards the tip, — a large mouth, good teeth, light hair, in curls of course, with perfectly azure eyes, that possessed a power of opening wider than any eyes Lawrence thought he had ever seen before.

"Have you any more children?" asked the young man, thinking some observation on Mr. Perkins' small grapes would seem only polite under the circumstances.

"Do you not think there are enough?" demanded Mr. Perkins, who was seated afar off on the sofa, stirring his tea at arm's length from him; at which remark Mrs. Perkins laughed, and Miss Ada giggled.

"There would be quite enough for me," answered Lawrence; "but I did not know whether you —"

"Thank you," interrupted Mr. Perkins; "it is no such easy work to feed, clothe, and educate five children that I should desire any more."

"*You* do not know anything about such matters, Mr. Barbour," observed the lady; and once again Lawrence marvelled where his relative had picked her up, while Mr. Perkins answered for him —

"Time enough — he has his life all to come yet — and his fortune to make, and his wife to find."

Whereupon Lawrence mentally registered a vow that he would never find one like Mrs. Perkins.

At this juncture it suddenly occurred to the chemist to ask the young man whether he had dined, and upon Lawrence answering in the negative, Mr. Perkins became clamorous for cold meat.

"I'll get you a chop in a minute," said the mistress of the house — an offer which Lawrence won her eternal gratitude by declining.

"We have supper at nine," she went on; but I am sure you must be hungry after your long journey. Let me get you a chop. Ada run and tell Jane to —"

"Let me wait till supper, if you please, Mrs. Perkins," interposed Lawrence. "I would rather wait, indeed, if you allow me. I have been feeding on London to-day, I think," he went on; "at any rate, I know I have walked about till my appetite has gone," and forthwith he plunged into the conversational abyss, told them how he had come on foot from the station, and asked about the places he had passed, and regretted the loss of his watch, which loss roused Mrs. Perkins' keenest sympathies.

"Was it gold? — dear, dear! — and oh, law! you don't say so — are you listening, Josiah? —

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nervously inquired the lady of the house — "a bit of mutton, or a mouthful of cheese, or — "

With a gesture almost of horror, the great man declined the proffered civility. "You know I never eat supper, ma'am," he said; "nor Olivine neither, thank you all the same." And the little girl, at the words, looked shyly towards Mrs. Perkins, and in a low, sweet, timid voice added, "No, thank you," but made no movement to come forward and shake hands, or be kissed, or anything. Silently she stood by Mr. Sondes' side, till Ada, equal to that or any occasion, slid off her chair, and going straight up to the little creature, began to embrace her.

That was a performance Lawrence Barbour never forgot: he laid down his knife and fork to contemplate it.

For her years, Ada Perkins had the thickest legs of any child with whom he had ever been thrown into contact; further, she had the clumsiest figure and the largest waist.

The fresh arrival, on the contrary, was slight and fragile, and when Ada put her fat red arms about her neck, and went through a ceremony of kissing and stroking the new child, who submitted herself to the infliction with the air of a martyr, Lawrence could have laughed aloud.

"Come with me, do," Ada whispered, trying to lead her victim off captive, and Mr. Sondes chancing to pause in a sentence at this crisis, heard the entreaty, and released Olivine's hand. "Come with me," repeated Miss Perkins, and she led the little girl up towards Lawrence, and saying, "Speak to him, Oli[illegible] that's our cousin who has come to live with u[illegible]

not merely Miss Sondes, but also Lawrence, with unspeakable confusion.

"She's such a dear, she's such a dear," and Ada executed a miniature war dance round her, and kissed Olivine again (who unceremoniously wiped the kiss away next minute), and put her arms round her neck, and looked uglier all the time than Lawrence had ever thought it was possible for a child to look.

"Will you shake hands with me?" he asked, and Olivine put out a little hand, and placed it shyly in his.

"How are the cats, Olivine?" inquired Mrs. Perkins, with an effort at seeming at ease, which signally failed.

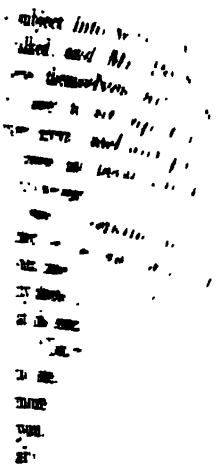
"They are very well, thank you," and the child lifted a pair of lovely eyes — oh, lovely! — to her questioner's face.

"She has got two cats and a kitten," explained Ada, and Lawrence sincerely pitied Mr. Perkins for owning a daughter with such a face, and voice.

"And I have a dog, and a parrot, and four rabbits, and a pair of doves," added the child, taking courage, and addressing herself to Lawrence.

"And the doves say cock-aroo, cock-aroo, all the day long, and the parrot calls himself prutty Poll, prutty Poll, that way," mocked Miss Ada, opening her mouth wide, and settling her head down in her short neck, "and the rabbits go so" (making a feint of leaping), "and the dog comes down stairs bow-wow, wow-wow," proceeded the young lady.

"My dear." It was Mr. Perkins who spoke, and Mrs. Perkins immediately desired her daughter to hush,



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are not worth being curious about. Well, the Lord is the judge of us all, both great and small," finished Mrs. Perkins, a little irrelevantly, as it seemed to Lawrence, who was beginning to think that his relations made him feel very much at home indeed.

"Will you tell me your name?" he said, turning to the child, who answered with that sweet gravity which seemed so charming —

"Olivine Sondes."

"Olivine — how singular, how pretty! It is almost as pretty as you are."

"Well, I'm sure; what would your uncle say to that if he was here!" exclaimed Mrs. Perkins, while Ada performed another *pas seul*, and laughed, and giggled till Lawrence could have choked her.

"I shall be the death of that brat, to a certainty," he thought to himself; but his further reflections were cut short by the entrance of Mr. Sondes, who, saying, "Now, Olivine — Good night, Mrs. Perkins," took the little girl into custody once again, and was departing without further leave-taking when, remembering Lawrence, he requested the young man to "step this way for a moment."

Greatly wondering, Lawrence walked into the hall, where, under the gas-light, Mr. Sondes surveyed him at his leisure.

He looked him all over, up and down, from his head to his boots, and from his boots up to the hair of his head again.

"Then — "You'll do," said Mr. Perkins' senior partner, the proprietor of many shares, of numerous houses, and of that sugar refinery in Goodman's Fields, already mentioned — "you'll do," and he held out

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"Don't forget, Perkins. I wish him to come over," the head of the firm repeated; and Mr. Perkins looked both surprised and nettled as he answered, "I will not forget; he shall go to you." Having received which assurance, Mr. Sondes departed, satisfied.

"That was more than he ever said to me," remarked Mr. Perkins, as he and Lawrence walked slowly back, after seeing Mr. Sondes safely out of Distaff Yard.

"Now I wonder — I really do" — and at this point the manufacturing chemist paused, having found at last a product which it puzzled him to analyse — "whatever he can want with you."

"It is natural that a master should wish to see his servant, is it not?" asked Lawrence; and this matter-of-fact solution of the enigma so astonished Mr. Perkins that he did not recover from his surprise during the whole of the evening.

"So, he's gone at last!" exclaimed Mrs. Perkins, when they re-entered the parlour. "Anybody, to see the airs he gives himself, would think we were all his slaves."

"This young man says Mr. Sondes is his master," observed the chemist, indicating Lawrence.

"And so he is, and so, for that matter, are you. I have come here to do what I am told, to learn what you can teach me. We may as well call things by their right names; and if I am not your servant, and if you and Mr. Sondes are not my masters, I do not understand English, that is all."

"There are not many Londoners who would care to speak such very plain English, then," answered Mr. Perkins; "and from all I have heard about the family, I certainly never expected to listen to it out of the mouth of one of the Barbours of Mallingford. You must be very different from the rest of your people, I take it."

"If more of my people had been like me, perhaps the Barbours might never have lost Mallingford," retorted Lawrence; on receiving which reply Mr. Perkins opined that some day he should understand his kinsman better, and his kinsman understand him.

"I want to do the best I can for you," he finished.

"And I will do the best I can for you," Lawrence answered, and involuntarily almost his heart went out towards this plain, business man, for whom he had already conceived a great respect and liking.

"Then don't let there be anything more about servant and master between you and me," said Mr. Perkins, grasping his kinsman's proffered hand. "We will work together if we can, and I'll teach you all I know; and I hope you will succeed no worse than I have done."

After the children were dispatched to their innocent slumbers — after even Miss Ada had (with much dif-

ficulty) been induced to relieve society of her presence — after the supper things had been removed by Jane — after Mrs. Perkins had retired for the night — the chemist and Lawrence sat talking together for hours, about Mallingford, about Distaff Yard, about London and business, and the money which can be made in business.

As a matter of course, Mr. Sondes' name would obtrude itself occasionally, and at last Lawrence asked some question about the senior partner, which led on to the further inquiry as to what sort of woman his wife was supposed to be.

"He never had a wife," answered Mr. Perkins; at which piece of intelligence his companion looked aghast and murmured —

"That little girl."

"Olivine. She's not his child at all; she is his niece; and a queer, old-fashioned little witch is that same Miss Olivine. They are both alone in the world, and they live alone together in a great house over at Stepney, where there is a staircase so wide you could drive a coach and four down it, and a hall so large you could turn the horses round. Ay, now, that is a singular establishment if you like; and there is a sad story hanging to it also. Mr. Sondes had a brother, a clergyman, and wherever they met her I don't know, but they both did meet Olivine's mother in some place, and both fell in love with her at the same time; but she fell in love with the parson. She had a fortune, and people said while she was fond of him he was fond of her money. Anyhow, they married, and a wretched life he led her, if all accounts be true. He drank, and he beat her; and though they had lots of children they

"Ay, that shows what friends and capital joined can do for a man," said Mr. Perkins. "He is as rich as a Jew."

"And as insolent as a Christian," finished Lawrence. "Look here, Mr. Perkins," he went on, "I hate Mr. Alwyn, and I hate his daughter, and I hate every man, woman, and child I ever saw enter his gates; not," he added, "that I have spoken to the fellow twice in my life."

"That is a pity," answered the chemist, regarding the question from a purely commercial point of view, "for he could make a man of you."

"I hope to be one without his assistance," said Lawrence, shortly; and when Mr. Perkins left him, he sat down on his box, and looked over the prospects of his new life.

Many a time, subsequently, he recalled that first night in London, and the projects that then filled his brain. Many a time afterwards he could see a lad full of youth, and health, and hope, sketching out the story of his existence.

He had thrown off his coat and waistcoat, and in his shirt sleeves mentally fought the fight of years. He learned, he worked, he battled, he conquered, sitting there all alone in his little chamber! He recalled the events of the day — could it be only one day? He thought about his new home, and his new relations; about Distaff Yard, and Mr. Sondes; about his walk through London; about his father and brother; about Olivine, and Olivine's mother; about that large house in Stepney; and then he went to bed, and lay thinking through the darkness, till at length, thoroughly tired out, he fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER V.

Enlightened.

THERE is not much likeness between the words Stibenhede and Stepney, but there is less likeness between Stepney as it is and Stibensheath as it was.

Meagre enough are the materials out of which we have at the present day to draw our mental picture. Gone are the palaces, and the ancient mansions — gone the men and women, gone the green fields and the country, and the trees and the gardens; whilst concerning Stepney, history is more reticent than its wont, more provokingly suggestive, more irritatingly silent.

"Of great antiquity and of great importance;" says an old chronicler. "Stepney was once," he proceeds, "the residence of kings, the seat of parliament, which was held there, and the place where the deans of St. Paul's had their country mansion, some faint remains of which are still to be seen."

These lines were traced in 1770. Even then the glories of Stepney would seem to have become a tradition, for the historian never tells us what kings lived there, when parliament sat, at what date Stepney was of importance;* even then the silence of the ages had settled down on the place, and though many wealthy and responsible citizens had seats in the village, towards which London was already creeping up, still an hundred years ago it was sinking in the social scale, sinking slowly and surely.

* Since writing the above, I find mention made of a parliament held at Stepney, by Edward I., in the year 1292.

And now, Ichabod, — the glory has departed. There is no famous ground here — for we know not why or wherefore the place was ever famous; there are few good houses in the parish — alas! how small a parish it is now! Over the once pleasant fields the meanest and poorest streets conduct to more streets, poor and mean also.

The vaguest tradition — the most common-place reality! The few large dwellings that remain fail to carry us back to any time when either the great or noble lived and suffered. We connect no tragedy with the spot. Save that it is said Lady Rachel Russell retired here to indulge her grief, there is no pathetic interest, so far as we know, connected with the place.

Here, as elsewhere, tears have fallen, — hearts been broken, but man has kept no record of his fellow's grief; and for this reason man finds no interest in loitering here. He sees God's creatures struggling for bread, labouring in the sweat of their brows for money which is oftentimes sorely needed. He walks among the sternest realities of existence as he paces those narrow streets. The curse is made visible in a neighbourhood where vice, and poverty, and sickness, and sorrow jostle each other along the pavements. There is no best here now, unless, indeed, it be the shops filled with wonderful finery and elaborate jewellery in the Commercial Road. Where do these shops find customers? Where? — Alas! this is an age in which if people go hungry they must be clothed — in which —. I must stop at this point and turn back to the Stepney Lawrence Barbour saw when he went to visit Mr. Sondes on the day following that on which

two fingers, which civility Lawrence, as in duty bound, thankfully accepted.

"Let me see you at Stepney," proceeded the auto-, and Lawrence bowed acquiescence.

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mansion be transformed into, twenty years hence, Sir John? Possibly, if it be good enough, into an asylum for idiots! Where youth and beauty, where rank and wealth have assembled, there will be long dining-tables surrounded by jabbering imbeciles. What would you? The world goes round, and the houses go with it.

They are here to-day, tenanted by the great and noble, by the wealthy and decorous; and they turn up to-morrow, filled with the halt, the blind, the mad, the bad, the very sweepings of the streets.

Or else their place, like the place of their olden inhabitants, knows them no more; and this — like an ancient grave disturbed to make way for the remains of a new-comer — is, to my thinking, saddest of all.

In a book written not very long ago, I described a house with every room in which I was familiar — a house I loved; the house where Alan Ruthven lived and Hugh Elyot died. When those volumes were written, the old place was still standing, the old rooms were as large and bright and sunshiny as ever; the chestnuts budded in the spring, and stood stately with flower and foliage over the water; from the upper windows a view was to be had across the marshes to Epping Forest. In all save its name, Marsh Hall was a reality; and now — well, now there is a street through the mansion where those I knew so well lived and suffered; the gable end of Alan Ruthven's factory still remained a few weeks ago, but even that is now, no doubt, level with the ground; the chestnuts are cut down; the garden is covered with houses and bricks, rubbish and mortar; the pond is drained; the conserva-

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little brick tenements; there is no garden at this present time; only, alas! the place where a garden has been.

When Lawrence Barbour, however, having passed through that street where, on the south side, every second building is a tavern, with "fine view of the river," painted red upon blue, blue upon red, green upon black, had crossed the "bridges," and made his way from the side of the Regent's Canal Dock into the Commercial Road, and thence, after about a mile's more walking, found himself at length in Stepney Causeway, — there was an odour of aldermanic gentility still hanging about the place; it was quiet, but respectable; it was dull, but not vulgar. The feet that have since profanely trodden those staircases were then roaming in far other scenes. Have patience! we are standing, at last in spirit, with Lawrence Barbour on the door-step of that house which was once tenanted by Alderman Shakespeare. The door stands hospitably open at this present moment, but in the days I speak of things were differently managed, and after the young man had knocked, he was admitted into the house by an old woman, who ushered him into the back room on the ground floor, which was called by courtesy Mr. Sondes' study.

Nor, although "study" is a large word wherewith to designate the sanctum of a business man, was the name altogether inappropriate?

In that room Mr. Sondes both read hard and studied hard. The walls were lined with book-shelves up to the very ceiling, and the book-shelves were filled with the works of the best authors of former days.

For modern literature Mr. Sondes cared little. Like many men who have from any cause been thrown off the main lines of life to some of its tranquil sidings, he sought his friends in the past rather than in the present; in memory, and the writings of the immortal dead, rather than amongst living men and living thinkers. Excepting books connected with the profession in which he was most interested, Mr. Sondes bought nothing new; but all the most expensive and most recent works on chemistry he purchased with avidity; purchased, and read, and mastered, and turned in due time to good purpose for his own benefit.

There were book-shelves in the deep recesses on both sides the old-fashioned fire-place; book-shelves covering the panelled wood-work dividing his study from the dining-room; book-shelves on the south wall behind the door, and book-shelves to right and left of the large window which looked out in those days on a pleasant garden well stocked with fruit-trees. Beyond the field was a small paddock, now covered by Dorset Street.

Drawn up to the window was a library-table, on which were piled books, pamphlets, manuscripts, and mechanical drawings; between the table and the fire was placed an easy, very easy chair, occupied by Mr. Sondes, who rose, however, when Lawrence entered, and greeted him with a cordiality that offered a striking contrast to his manner on the preceding evening.

Mr. Perkins had sent a letter over by Lawrence, and this letter Mr. Sondes proceeded to read, bidding his visitor find a seat for himself the while.

When Mr. Sondes had read every word of the

epistle slowly over, he laid it down upon the table, and then began to interrogate Lawrence.

"How did he like London — did he mean to stick to business — to put his heart into it, in fact — did he want to make a fortune, or to grub on all his life — as — as — Mr. Perkins has done, in fact," finished Mr. Sondes, staring at Lawrence all the time as a person might look through a window.

"I want to make my fortune," answered the youth; "a man can grub on anywhere, but it is not everywhere he can push his way in the world."

"And how do you mean to push your way in the world?" asked Mr. Sondes, which rather difficult question Lawrence replied to, by saying, "that he did not know — he had come to London to learn."

"And do you want to be taught — are you wishful to receive instruction?" demanded the other.

For a moment Lawrence hesitated; he wanted to understand what Mr. Sondes was driving at before going too far in his replies, but after that moment's thought, he said earnestly: —

"Mr. Sondes, it was not to earn a mere living I resolved to come to London; I could have got that as a curate — as an ensign — without, as my father puts it, losing caste. I may speak plainly to you, I hope, without giving offence," and Lawrence paused while Mr. Sondes, leaning back in his seat, with his legs stretched out to their full length, his elbows resting on the arms of his chair, and the tips of his fingers touching each other, nodded assent, and added, "Go on — say all you have to say — as though I had nothing to do with you — as though you were likely never to have anything to do with me."

"I cannot do that," answered Lawrence; "it is precisely because you have to do with me and I with you that I venture to say what I certainly should not think of intruding upon any other person. I am going to work for you, and you wish to find out whether I am likely to work to any purpose."

"Put it that way, if you like," said Mr. Sondes; "say it will be for our mutual interest to understand each other perfectly, and go on. You could have been an ensign or a curate, and gained your living in either the church or the army, but you selected business because — I wait to hear the reasons for your preference."

"Because I saw that business gives, not merely a living, but wealth; and that wealth is power."

"Where did you see business give wealth, and wealth power?" inquired Mr. Sondes; and, simple though the question may sound, Lawrence found himself puzzled to answer it.

Like all young people, he had worked out a general theory from a particular case, and even while he felt perfectly satisfied of the truth and accuracy of his own conclusions, yet, sitting opposite to that cool, cold, clear-headed individual, he felt it difficult to give any reason which might seem sufficient to Mr. Sondes for the faith he held.

For the first time his answer drifted away from the question; for the first time he replied to one question with another.

"Does not England owe all her prosperity and greatness to commerce?" he asked; "and is not it an acknowledged fact that wealth is power?"

"Does not the honeycomb owe all it contains to

the industry of that useful insect the bee, and is it not an acknowledged fact that honey is sweet?" retorted Mr. Sondes. "Let us go back to the point whence we started. We were talking about yourself, not about England; you said you had seen business give wealth, and wealth power, and I asked you where."

"Well, I saw it at Mallingford," answered Lawrence, desperately; "I saw a vulgar, illiterate snob buy the place where we had lived for centuries, and then I saw that snob sell Mallingford End to a worse snob; and I saw the whole county-side bow down and worship Mammon, the rector's wife toadying to the first great man's wife, and the curate bustling up to dinner at Mr. Alwyn's, as though he were going to heaven."

"I can quite believe it," said Mr. Sondes; "but what then?"

"Why then, Mr. Nott and Mr. Alwyn both made their money in trade, and money enabled them to buy Mallingford End."

"Well?" persisted Mr. Sondes.

"Well," repeated Lawrence, a little nettled, "does not that prove the truth of what I said?"

"Not in the least," answered the other calmly; "you saw the men who had won great prizes in the lottery of commerce; the men who have gained only blanks you have still to behold: as well might you select a bishop or archbishop for a type of ordinary church success, and say I will enter the church because in it men are rich and powerful."

"If success in the church were dependent solely on merit, I should not perhaps be wrong in doing as you suggest," answered Lawrence, who, seeing the weak

point in Mr. Sondes' armour, was not slow in taking advantage of it. "Business is the one occupation in which a man may rise, no thanks to anybody but himself."

"Is it?" returned Mr. Sondes. "I am afraid, if you exhaust the matter, you will find that even in business kissing goes a good deal by favour. You will see, if you look about you, that a millionnaire is almost as rare as a bishop."

"But wherever one goes in England men are to be met with who have made large fortunes in trade."

"Yes," was the reply; "and every time you walk through the London streets you will meet scores of men who have failed to make fortunes in trade. Take all the small houses even in a neighbourhood like this. Take the miles of humble dwellings — take the hundreds of thousands of men living in those houses who are making off life hardly and with anxious difficulty. If success were an easy thing to compass, if wealth were a mere matter of hard work and industry, all our business people would be merchant princes."

"But many have not the money; and —"

"And 'what one person has done another may do,' you were going to say," finished Mr. Sondes, as Lawrence stopped short. "True; but then the chances are ten thousand to one against that other. Probably there are few who have not started in life with precisely the same views and expectations as yourself. It is so easy to dream castles — it is so hard to build them. People get so weary as the years go by, bringing nothing in their wake but failure or moderate success. So many qualities are necessary to ensure even comparative wealth — so many circumstances may arise to impede

a man's course. He may have relations dependent on him — he may have a wife who drags him down — he may lose his health — he may have a swarm of sickly children — he may make enemies — he may have too many friends — he may find the business pace too fast for his powers, the race too long for his strength."

"Is there any use, then, in trying at all?" asked Lawrence almost fiercely.

"Yes," was the answer. "There is use, at any rate, in your trying, for you are young, well-bred, strong, determined, hopeful, unencumbered. If to these advantages you are willing to add knowledge, you may be hereafter a rich man, though I do not say so rich a man as Mr. Alwyn. He did not make his money over honestly, and I presume you have no ambition to become a respectable rogue. By-the-by," added Mr. Sondes, "you know of course the nature of the business in which we are engaged at Limehouse. Talking of honesty reminds me of our own trade there, which many people might not consider exactly the proper thing. We are adulterators: does that word shock you?"

"I have not an idea what you mean by it," answered Lawrence.

"You have heard of food being adulterated. Well, we make the articles for adulteration to order: that is, suppose a grocer wants a lot of chicory, he comes to us, and we grind it for him; or he requires a quantity of imitation peppercorns to grind with the genuine article, — we supply him. Or, it may be, he prefers to sell Bermuda arrowroot at considerably under cost price; in that case he has to apply to us for arrowroot made from potatoes. It is the rage for cheapness that

induces a trade like ours: people would rather pay twopence for an inferior article than threepence for genuine goods. Quantity, not quality, is what they look for. The consequence of which is, that grocers must adulterate, and the grocers must be able to procure the wherewithal to adulterate from a firm like ours, where every ingredient used is perfectly pure of its sort, and harmless. We supply them precisely as the chicory importers supply us, each selling a genuine article of its kind. It is a snug trade, but at the same time some people might object to it; for which reason it is only fair you should know the nature of the business into which you are entering."

"But what has all that to do with chemistry?" asked Lawrence, whose face had clouded considerably while Mr. Sondes was speaking.

"Everything: it takes a first-rate chemist, I can tell you, to be a good adulterator; and Mr. Perkins is a first-rate chemist; so thorough a one that I often think it is a pity he should be wasting his talents in a little poking hole like Distaff Yard. Had he married differently, and that we had come across each other sooner, I believe he might have made a fortune, — but that woman! There is a saying amongst our London poor 'that a man must ask his wife's leave to get rich.' Remember the proverb, for it is a true one. Don't go and marry a woman who will keep you down in the mud all your life. We dine at five. Olivine is somewhere about the house; you might go and ask her to show you her pets, whilst I finish my letters. What I have said ought not to discourage you. The world, full as it is, can always make room for a pushing, energetic, ready man."

CHAPTER VI.

Olivine.

Mr. Sondes watched Lawrence out of the room with very much the same kind of expression as that a man might wear who looked after a horse he had some idea of buying. Then he drew up his chair to the table and commenced writing, while Lawrence proceeded to the next apartment, in which Mr. Sondes had said he should probably find Olivine.

She was not there, however; but the servant who had admitted him, and who was now engaged in laying the cloth for dinner, took him up-stairs, where, in the drawing-room, they discovered Olivine, nestled into the window-seat, looking out at Stepney Causeway.

"Your uncle promised that you would show me your pets," said the young man, by way of introduction.

"Do you care about pets?" asked Miss Olivine, lifting her eyes to his, and reading him as children do.

"Yes, very much: I left a dog at home that I was as fond of as you are of your doves," he answered; but Olivine shook her head in dissent.

"I could not leave them behind me," she said; and of course that settled the matter.

"What was your dog's name?" Olivine asked, after a pause.

"Gelert. I called him after poor Gelert who was killed by his master. You remember that story, don't you?"

"No; Olivine had never heard anything about Gelert, and instantly became clamorous for information.

"Tell me about him; please do — please — please!" and the little hands were clasped together, and the sweet face upturned to his with such an earnestness of entreaty that Lawrence could not choose but stoop and kiss her.

"Show me your pets," he said, "and then I will tell you all about Gelert;" to which bargain Olivine agreed by taking his hand in hers, and conducting him into the withdrawing-room, so called, but which was really rather an antechamber, where, in an immense cage, Poll was engaged in the somewhat monotonous, but apparently congenial, occupation of swinging.

At sight of Lawrence the wretch paused in his amusement, and commenced shrieking out at the top of his hoarse voice —

"Who are you? — who are you?" and then he went off into a series of whispers and murmurs which Lawrence had no great difficulty in conjecturing to be curses.

The creature had been taught to swear in whispers, and although those whispers were almost inaudible, the effect was ludicrous beyond all expression.

"Poll, Poll — pretty, pretty Poll," cried out Olivine; whereupon Poll turned down one eye towards her, and, immediately becoming enthusiastic, screamed out, "Ol, Olly, Olivine," which last word seemed to Lawrence so perfect an imitation of Miss Ada Perkins that he began laughing.

This drew the parrot's attention back to him, and the bird thereupon grew furious. It flapped its wings,

it flew up against the bars of its cage, it hopped from perch to perch, still shrieking out, "Who are you? who are you? who the ——" At which point it invariably became inaudible, greatly to the advantage of society in general and of his young mistress in particular.

"He is very funny, is not he?" said Olivine; "but I do not love him like the doves; they are so soft, and so beautiful, and they laid an egg last summer."

This ornithological eccentricity seemed to have given Olivine such intense satisfaction, that Lawrence could only hope the performance might be repeated on some future occasion.

"It is getting too dark to see the rabbits," she went on. "You must come some morning, if you want to go out to them; and now I have nothing more, only the cats, and I do not know where they are, except Flossy. Flossy has a green eye, and a blue one; is not it odd?"

She had the cat under her arm as she said this, and was ascending the stairs leading from the door opening into the garden to the hall.

With her disengaged hand, however, she suddenly arrested Lawrence's attention, and caused him to glance across the hall, in the very middle of which a tabby cat was standing on her hind legs, motionless."

"She does that fifty times a day," Olivine said. "Uncle does laugh so at her. I taught her to beg, and now whenever she meets me she goes up just as you see her. She would stand like that for ever so long, if I told her. Wouldn't you, oh! you dear, dear old pussens" — and the child made a dive at the tabby, and securing her, carried both cats up to the drawing-

room, where in the twilight she sat down on the floor at Lawrence's feet, and bade him tell her about Gelert.

In the dusk he told her that story; with the reflection from the street-lamps making strange lights on the walls, with the blaze from the fire illuminating the child's face, Lawrence repeated to her the legend of that faithful hound; but when he came to the end he wished he had not done so.

Down her cheeks came the tears pouring like hail; through her fingers he could see little pools of wet making their way; he could perceive how the slight frame was shaken with sobs — how fully the excitable child entered into the misery of the narrative and believed in it.

She forgot her cats, she forgot herself, she forgot Lawrence — forgot everything save "Poor Gelert, po-o-or — por-oor Gelert," as she tried to say.

Then he tried to comfort her. Did the memory of that scene never recur to him in the after days, I wonder? He raised her from the floor, and drew her to him, and kissed — he who had never owned a little sister — the bitter tears away.

"Olivine, my dear," he said; but the grief only grew more pathetic, and she buried her head in his breast, and cried there to her heart's content — cried till his shirt was limp with moisture — cried till she was tired, poor child, poor Olivine!

Then, half in jest, half in forgetfulness, Lawrence began singing to her — making believe he was hushing her to sleep — and in a moment the child was still.

Softly the song rose and fell — softly the young man hummed the old familiar air that had come to his

memory. Scarcely articulating the words, he went through verse after verse, looking into the fire the while, and thinking of anything rather than of the child on his knee — of the place he was in. Softly, oh! softly the song rose and fell and then died away; and when it did so, Olivine dropped out of his arms, and, seizing his hands, kissed and fondled them in a sort of rapture.

"More, more," she said, "sing more;" and she sat at his feet, like one in a dream, while he ran through his little stock of songs to pleasure her.

Was it pleasure, though? was it pure pleasure for the little creature to sit with her lovely eyes filled full of tears, hanging on every note of the music as if it were her native tongue she heard spoken after years of silence?

This was what the lonely desolate life had done. This was what the system of education had effected. Under other auspices, influenced by other circumstances, the child might have been as thoughtless and as gay as children — thank God — usually are; but, as it chanced, the delicately attuned harp was strung up to its highest pitch, and Olivine could bear no excitement of any kind without the tears starting into her eyes, without her heart being torn and agitated.

For an organisation like this what was the future likely to hold in store for her? What? Ah! Lawrence Barbour could not, even in fancy, picture the end to that story as he sat looking in the fire.

Before he had exhausted his string of ballads, Mr. Sondes came upon the pair. Perhaps music was not exactly an accomplishment for which he had given his new acquaintance credit; perhaps, the song awoke olden

memories in his heart, for he stood in the doorway listening, — stood in the outer darkness, looking into the room where the firelight was flickering about the antique furniture and casting strange shadows across the portraits and pictures hanging upon the walls.

Never a human being had a softer, sweeter, more pathetic voice than Lawrence Barbour. People think a lovely voice goes invariably with a tender nature, and are surprised and incredulous when they hear of cold selfish men, and hard calculating women, being able to sing like the angels and archangels in heaven; but I hold, and have ever held, that the great gift of music has nothing to do with the heart, and that some of the most passionate and devoted beings who ever dwelt on earth have remained, so far as that power of expression goes, dumb, and passed into the next world mutely and in silence.

But, as I have just said, most people are of a different opinion, and Mr. Sondes, being of the majority, decided that Lawrence Barbour must be possessed of every Christian grace and cardinal virtue.

"It is very kind of you," he said at last, crossing the room and laying his hand on the young man's shoulder, "very kind indeed of you to amuse my little girl. I have often thought of having her taught music, but I doubt whether it would be good for her."

Lawrence did not answer. Standing up and looking at the firelight playing over the walls, he was thinking that, if Olivine had possessed any musical talent, her uncle could not have hindered her learning. For himself he could never remember the time when he had not sung. So soon as he could stand beside the piano, he had been wont to pick out airs for himself among

the black and white keys; he had chanted forth all sorts of old melodies in the great rooms at Mallingford End; he had made the long corridors ring with the clear treble of his childish voice; he had gone about singing under the shadow of the oaks and the elms; and when he ceased to be a child his gift only changed in character, and settled down into the sweetest tenor conceivable.

To such an one the idea of "teaching" seemed absurd. If the child were to sing, she would sing; if she were not to sing, no art could make her other than a mere machine. She could appreciate music; she had given him proof of that; but appreciation is so far removed from talent, that as a rule talent cannot appreciate any talent but its own. Talent can criticise; it requires quite another kind of genius to appreciate.

Dimly Lawrence Barbour was groping after this truth as he stood leaning against the chimney-piece, looking at the old-fashioned cabinets, at the carved oaken chairs.

"I should like to learn, uncle;" it was Olivine who spoke, rubbing her head against Mr. Sondes' hand the while, after the fashion of a pet kitten.

"Then you shall, my darling." And straightway Olivine clapped her hands with delight, while Lawrence looked on wonderingly.

She was such a shy child, and yet so demonstrative — so quiet, and yet so enthusiastic — so patient, and yet so eager. Many a long year passed before he understood that phase of womankind, and when light dawned upon him it was too late. Yet, no; for it is never too late on this side eternity to see truth.

Shortly afterwards dinner was announced. Olivine,

young though she was, sat at table with them. An only child has many advantages, or many drawbacks, whichever way you please to take it; and being constantly with grown-up people was one of those drawbacks to Olivine. Never a matron of fifty conducted herself with more solemn propriety than Olivine at table. The eternal fitness of things, more especially of the things on a dinner-table, seemed early to have taken hold of her young imagination, and to have invested her manners with a certain dignity wonderful to behold.

Mr. Sondes was a stickler for etiquette. Lawrence could perceive that fact at a glance.

Due East, and living all alone, he yet dined with as much ceremonial as any resident in Belgravia. When Mr. Barbour senior lost Mallingford, he lost his pride in externals also; and the meals at Clay Farm were oftentimes no better served than those in the most petty tradesman's house in Mallingford.

Like all those who feel that a fall in fortune has involved also a fall in station, Lawrence was keenly sensitive to matters of this kind, and the fact of everything in Mr. Sondes' establishment being done decently and in order increased his liking for that gentleman amazingly.

And this liking was reciprocal. The more Mr. Sondes saw of the youth the more his heart inclined towards him. A gentleman by birth, yet above the prejudices of his order; brought up in idleness, yet willing to put his shoulder to the wheel and work, as though it had been his portion all his life; independent, yet not impatient of advice; resolute, yet sensible enough to stand and hear what older people had to

say; capable of forming and maintaining an opinion, yet thankful to hear the opinions of others; possessed of great talents, yet neither vain nor proud of them: surely these were just the qualities to attract the attention and arouse the interest of a man like Mr. Sondes, who had travelled almost the same path as Lawrence was now pursuing, with the same ardour, with the same hopes, years before; years and years before.

He said to himself, "Here is a lad, with about every element of success in him; a lad who, properly looked after, will become a great man some day;" and he conceived a liking for the youth straightway.

To a certain extent Mr. Sondes judged correctly; for Lawrence was pretty nearly certain to gain a prize in the business lottery his new friend had spoken of.

And yet, with all this strength, there was much weakness. Amongst the seed-corn tares were mingled; and unhappily it is never till the grain springs that man can tell what the field of any other man's life is going to bring forth.

CHAPTER VII.

Repulsion.

DAY succeeded to day, and Lawrence Barbour had been for two months domiciled in Distaff Yard.

The small sitting-room, the little bed-chamber, the mode of life, the very business itself, no longer seemed strange to him. It was the old existence, the idle hours, the lack of all occupation, the monotony of the weeks, the restlessness, the discontent which it now amazed him to look back upon.

How he had endured so long that state of mere vegetation, without hope, without excitement, without employment? was the question Lawrence continually kept asking himself; whilst every letter from his father contained the inquiry, "When are you coming home; are you not sickened of business vulgarity yet?"

"Those who look for nuggets," answered the youth on one occasion, "do not usually expect to find them lying about on the carpets of properly-ordered drawing-rooms, but are content to labour in the earth till they discover the precious metal."

"Those who labour in the earth," replied Mr. Barbour senior, "are usually unfitted to spend their money, when obtained, in drawing-rooms."

"So be it," returned Lawrence. "I will take my chance;" and he put his shoulder to the wheel in earnest, and worked as Mr. Perkins had never thought it possible a gentleman born could work.

He had taken his road in life on his own responsibility, and when a resolute man does this he feels that, let the way prove rough or smooth, he is bound, for his credit's sake, to make the best of it. Had his path led him over burning ploughshares, Lawrence would still have proceeded to his object. He was strong, physically, and perhaps that has more to do with resolute perseverance than most people are willing to admit.

He felt it no hardship to rise early and to labour late. None of the advantages of station had ever been his except its leisure; and leisure without money, society, or amusement, is apt to grow rather wearisome.

Looking back over the years, he could reme-

the few events that had ever broken the monotony of his existence.

Once he unearthed a badger, and spent a day compassing its capture; another time he killed a snake, which he and his brother carried all through the woods of Lallard Park, and left at the head-keeper's lodge — a great snake, which stank abominably, and which, hung over the branch of a tree, kept writhing and twisting till sunset, when the galvanic life left it, and all was quiet.

Lord Lallard came riding up to the Clay Farm two days afterwards, to ask Lawrence where he found the reptile, and how he killed it; and on the strength of this visit Mr. Barbour bemoaned himself for weeks, and lamented exceedingly when he enlarged on how intimate his father and the late Lord Lallard had been.

"Like brothers," finished Mr. Barbour, "like brothers; and his son would not have called here now, only to inquire about the snake."

Then he broke out and told Lawrence he would not have him trespassing on other people's domains.

"I was strict enough myself once," whined the gentleman-pauper, "and I won't have my boys behaving themselves like common vagrants."

Whereupon Lawrence thought it was quite as well his father did not know he had in former days been in the habit of going poaching on Lord Lallard's property. The Barbours had not fallen from their high estate with a mighty crash. They had not gone out like rockets — after blaze and brilliance subsiding into sudden darkness. They had not given up Mallingford without a struggle, and that very struggle had done more to lower them socially than their poverty. The

land was let off, the covers were rented out to strangers, there were many shifts resorted to, many expedients adopted, before Mr. Barbour allowed the property to pass away from him and his irrevocably. He saved as carefully as he had once spent liberally, and the consequence was, that even before he and his boys sought shelter in the Clay Farm, they were looked upon by the county as Barbours of Mallingford no longer.

Lawrence himself could not recollect the time when he had ever received much respect from any one, or reflected upon the state in which it had pleased God to place him, with either pride or satisfaction; while as he grew up, seeing how much the world is influenced by appearances, he felt angry with himself for having done many things which were by no means orthodox and proper, and vexed at his father for having let him and his brother run wild like young colts about the country.

All his pleasures had been stolen, and that made them seem none the sweeter when he came to look back upon them in after-life.

Was there any happiness now in thinking of the game he had snared in Lord Lallard's woods, of the surreptitious fires he and his brother had kindled with stolen sticks on common ground, in bye-lanes and roads that were little traversed?

They had never managed to hit the happy medium in their cookery; the birds were either burnt to cinders, or came out of their clay moulds almost raw; yet there had been a keen enjoyment felt in tearing them limb from limb, and eating them all in a panic which Lawrence, in his maturer years, was perfectly unable to comprehend.

Only he knew that whenever he heard in church about the Israelites, he always thought of that food which he had been wont to swallow in such anxious haste, and he remembered likewise a terrible hour which came to him when he was, at thirteen years of age, prowling about Lord Lallard's grounds, seeking what he could destroy.

The old lord was lying dead up at the house, and Lawrence, who never poached on the Mallingford property, considered that an especially suitable and safe time for attacking the enemy's outposts with an old gun, a canister full of shot, and a powder-flask. He knew the gamekeepers would be off duty, and so he went boldly and popped at a pheasant.

The pheasant escaped, but not so Lawrence; who was about to load again, when the new lord laid his hand on his shoulder, and asked him who he was, and what he did there.

"I am a son of Mr. Barbour, of Mallingford End," answered the boy boldly, though he was quaking with fear all the time.

"Well, then, come back with me to your father, and we will hear what he has got to say to all this," said my lord; whereupon Lawrence besought his lordship to let him off. He offered him his gun, his canister, and his powder-flask. He turned out his pockets, and tried to bribe Lord Lallard with the contents. Crying bitterly, he held out to him in succession a knife with a broken blade, a bit of slate pencil, three half-pennies, one of them bad, a bullet, a piece of twine, a handkerchief, the thong of a whip, an old dog-collar, a battered tooth-pick, an apple with a piece bitten out of it, an old clasp purse containing some foreign coins

and a shilling, some crumbs of biscuit, a song-book, dog-eared and dirty, a few marbles, a lump of cobbler's wax, a morsel of putty, a gimlet without a point, and a rusty screw.

"I have nothing else I can give you," sobbed out Lawrence, "except my watch, and I cannot give you that because it was my mother's, and my father keeps it locked up; but when I am a man I will pay you all I owe you, if you will only let me go now."

But my lord stood gravely holding the treasures the boy had forced upon him in one hand, while he still with the other retained his hold of Lawrence's jacket.

"You may keep them all," pleaded the lad, eyeing wistfully the while his gimlet and the dog-collar.

Then Lord Lallard, looking down at the curiosities, burst out laughing, and laughed till the woods rang again.

"I tell you what it is, Master Lawrence Barbour," he said at last, "you will come to the gallows if you don't take care; poachers are thieves, and thieves often grow into murderers; do you understand, sir, are you attending to me?"

"Ye—e—s," answered Lawrence, and then he began laughing too, for he saw his lordship was going to let him off, and he was vowing to himself that he never would set foot in Lallard Woods again.

"You will get yourself into trouble," went on the great man. "You may be shot, or you may shoot somebody — likely to do one as the other with that old blunderbuss you have in your hand. If you get leave from your father, come to my head-keeper and ask him to take you out; I'll tell him to have a care of you —

but, bless my soul, haven't you game enough of your own at Mallingford without poaching on my manors?" he added, with a sudden recollection of the woods surrounding Mallingford End.

Then Lawrence told him — how the game was not theirs; how the land was let off; how he and his brother were not sent to school. In the fullness of his gratitude he made ample confession as to the snipes and woodcocks and pheasants he and his brother had captured and eaten; which revelation did not tend to raise the character of his keepers for vigilance in Lord Lallard's eyes.

"But I will never snare another," finished Lawrence, looking back sorrowfully towards the woods wherein he had spent so many happy days. "I never will, indeed; nor shoot one either."

"Come and ask leave of me or my keepers, and you may shoot as many as you like," answered his lordship; but Lawrence shook his head.

"My father would not let me," he said; and he went on very mournfully to the great avenue, where Lord Lallard bade him good-bye, and saying, "Be an honest, straightforward lad," tipped him a sovereign.

Which Lawrence, with his cheeks on fire, and his heart thumping against his ribs, put back into my lord's hand, thanking him for it, but he had rather not — he had rather not, indeed.

"Do you care for sovereigns so little?" asked the other, thinking of the foreign coins, and the halfpennies, and the marbles.

"I should care for them if I had them of my own," was the reply; "but I do not like to have money given to me, thank you, sir," added the boy, deprecatingly,

for he felt in his heart he was seeming ungrateful and ungracious, and he had not heart enough to put any polish on his words.

"You are right, my lad," said Lord Lallard, "and I was wrong;" and with a friendly nod he turned away, never to meet Lawrence again till the latter, five years afterwards, roaming with his brother through Lallard Woods, killed the snake, and hung it, as the keeper stated, "up to dry."

During the whole of the visit, the youth was in an agony lest his lordship should make any allusion to their previous meeting; but the man of the world had sense and tact, and said nothing on the subject till Lawrence was walking down the private road to open the gates for him.

Then — "It is a long time since you thought to bribe me," he remarked. "I suppose you have other things to do now, besides shoot at pheasants?"

"I wish I had," answered Lawrence, in so despondingly a tone that the nobleman was astonished. "I wish my father would let me go to London to push my fortune."

"Like Whittington," suggested Lord Lallard; but then, seeing his companion looked annoyed, he went on — "But why to London, and what should you do if you were there? Have you any friends — anyone who could give you a helping hand? London is a great place, and country people are apt to get lost in it."

"I do not think I should," was the answer.

"Can no situation be got for you? would a place under government —" began his lordship; but then he

hesitated, and Lawrence took up his unfinished sentence for him.

"My Lord," he said, "I am not fitted for a government appointment, and it would not be fitted for me. I mean to try and push my own way in the world after my own fashion; but I thank you for your intended kindness from my heart."

It was the incident of the sovereign over again, but Lord Lallard felt that in this, as in the former instance, Lawrence was quite right.

"I have an impression," he said, "that you ought to go to London, and that you will make your fortune. Whenever you do adventure into the great Babylon, come and see me; I should like to know how you are getting on," and he held out his hand to the youth, who, leaning over the gate, watched the great man riding away towards Lallard Park, till a turn in the road hid him from sight.

That visit had been a grand event in Lawrence's life. Looking back over his old existence from the new world of Distaff Yard, the young man found himself giving much prominence, in the mental picture of his past experience he sometimes amused himself with painting, to Lord Lallard, and Lord Lallard's sorrel horse.

In the past he had suffered many minor humiliations; patched shoes, threadbare clothes, the scornful looks of the newly rich, the compassionate regards of old friends, these things were branded on his memory in letters of bitterness.

The improvements at Mallingford End, the grand carriages that came forth drawn by sleek horses out of its gates, the girl who could not ride, but yet who

sallied out each day arrayed in the most perfect of habits, and tried at the very peril of her life to learn how to sit her horse; the pompous father who occupied the Mallingford pew at church, and took the lead in the responses, and gave largely at collections, and subscribed to the schools; the guests who stayed at Mallingford End in the summer, and surveyed Lawrence's thick shoes and unfashionable garments through eyeglasses, all these men and women, my hero hated with a hatred born of pride, jealousy, a consciousness of mental superiority, and a strong feeling of his own social inferiority.

He had been reared in a hard school, in one almost Spartan in its absence of all luxury or bodily indulgence, and terrible to any one possessed of the slightest sensitiveness on account of its continual humiliations.

Work, any work! to such a man after such a lot was happiness, the smallest recreation was pleasure. He ate no bread of idleness; he earned every holiday he took. He loved London — loved it as those only who have grown thoroughly sick and weary of the country ever can come to love the mighty city.

He could afford to dress better; but if he had not been able to do so, what did it matter? He was one of a crowd in the streets, and the passers-by cared nothing for him, or the cut of his coat, or the make of his boots. If London be the place for the rich, it is no less the heaven of the poor. Babylon holds no second sting for those who have fallen from their once proud position into the ranks. The men composing the great army encamped there have something better to do than criticise their neighbour's looks, or meddle with his antecedents.

There is a delight in losing all sense of personal identity which can never be thoroughly appreciated till one has lived in the heart of a vast town, surrounded by busy men, and occupied women.

This delight Lawrence Barbour soon began to experience, and, as I have said, he felt happy accordingly.

From morning till night he was busy in the factory, weighing, superintending, and seeing to the packing of the goods that had to be sent out.

He became interested in fresh orders; new customers were pleasing in his eyes; he soon learned his way about London, and paid money into banks, and collected accounts — being no way backward in urging the necessity for immediate settlements on dilatory debtors.

In the evenings he often went over to Stepney Causeway, and studied chemistry under Mr. Sondes, becoming learned in alkalis and acids, in crystals and gases, in vegetable and mineral products, in analysis and synthesis, while Olivine sat on a footstool beside the fire and hemmed handkerchiefs slowly, and put in wonderfully neat stitches.

He was a young man after Mr. Sondes' own heart, and Mr. Perkins, thinking the matter over to himself, decided that he ought to have been a young man after his heart too.

What manager would ever have laboured as Lawrence did? What hired servant could have been trusted as he trusted this distant kinsman?

In his time, in his work, in money matters, the young man was unexceptionable, and yet still Mr. Perkins felt there was something lying between Lawrence

and himself. On accasions, he and the stranger who ate with him, worked with him, slept under his roof, came near together as acetic acid and lead; but the next moment it seemed to the chemist that nature had somehow dropped vitriol into the combination and separated the chemical product.

"I cannot make out what it is," Mr. Perkins pondered and pondered; and the more he perplexed himself about the matter, the less he understood it.

He could detect the presence of barytes in white lead; he could ferret out sulphate of soda if mixed with carbonate of soda; he could trace precipitated sulphate of lime in quinine, and tell to a grain how much potash there was in iodide of potassium; but a human analysis was quite a different matter.

Mr. Perkins happened not to be so well skilled in psychology as in chemistry; for which reason he did not know the repulsive force that prevented himself and Lawrence drawing near to one another was — selfishness.

The stranger in a strange place was labouring, not for Josiah Perkins, but for Lawrence Barbour; not for love, or gratitude, or duty, so much as for wealth, for position, and for personal success.

CHAPTER VIII.

In the Park.

Although Mr. Perkins did not entertain the most lively affection for his kinsman, still he and Lawrence got on better than many relations who are professedly warmly attached to one another. If a man does well for himself he is pretty nearly sure to do well for his employers. There are erratic individuals, certainly, who, thinking to achieve great things for themselves, are continually leaving the irons of their masters to cool, while they thrust surreptitious irons into small fires of their own making. But these are speculative, not working men. They are people who, if started in a good trade on their own separate account to-morrow, would want to add another good trade to their former one before a week had passed.

They think a fortune is to be made in a minute; they imagine a person can do twenty different things well at once. They fancy they have "heads for organization," and such administrative minds, that they could so arrange their forces as to keep a hundred pots boiling at the same moment. They are always hopeful about new ventures; they are eternally striking out something at a "white heat," as they put it; they would like to be appointed chairmen of railway boards, chancellors of the exchequer, prime ministers — solely for the benefit of society, as they have an idea everything in creation only wants a little of their management to set it straight.

They have a contempt for their plodding neighbours. They wonder to see fortunes amassed by sheer dint of industry: if masters, they are for ever casting about to see whether a fresh experiment would not pay; if clerks, they have little speculations of their own, and are continually trying to better themselves; the consequence of all of which is, that they rarely do well for their families, and never for their employers.

Lawrence Barbour was not, however, one of these. Heart and soul he flung himself into the business at Distaff Yard; learning the ins and outs of adulteration thoroughly and rapidly. He was everywhere at once; the men never knew when they were secure from him; he seemed, young as he was, to know by intuition who were the skulkers, the eye-servants, the schemers, and the disaffected. He appeared and re-appeared when and where least expected; he never loitered on his errands; he never seemed wearied; never grumbled at any work which was put upon him, and withal he was uniformly pleasant and cheerful in the house.

"Quite a treasure," Mrs. Perkins informed her friend Mrs. Jackson, wife of the soap-boiler in John Street. "I declare to you, ma'am, he can match a ribbon, and remember to call at the fishmonger's, and get a pin put in my brooch as well or better than I can myself; I must bring him over to tea with me some evening for you to see," which Mrs. Perkins did, and Mrs. Jackson was charmed accordingly.

Altogether, Lawrence Barbour's start in London life was a success. He made no enemies, he gained some friends; he went oftener to the theatres perhaps than Mr. Perkins quite approved, but as he was always up and out at work the next morning by six o'clock, the

chemist felt it would be ungracious for him to make any remark. Certainly also he did not take to the children; he never snubbed them, it is true, but he managed by some means to keep even Miss Ada at arm's length; and had his behaviour towards Mrs. Perkins not been of the most deferential and respectful description, it is more than likely that lady might have found fault with a young gentleman who neither nursed the "baby," aged two years, nor romped with her eldest daughter, nor made much of any member of the juvenile fry.

As it was, however, a young man who handed chairs, poured water out of the kettle, opened the door for, and never took precedence of her, who carried her prayer-book to church, and gave her his arm as they walked along the narrow street leading to St. Ann's, was not to be lightly regarded, nor wilfully quarrelled with.

Not even when Mr. Perkins was "keeping company with her," had that individual paid her such delicate attentions as Lawrence now tendered in the course of their every-day life. "He was quite chivalrous" — Mrs. Perkins pronounced the word "chevalrouse" — "in his manner," the lady was wont to declare, "and you know, Mrs. Jackson, that is a very oncommon quality in a young gentleman."

"In a young or an old, I should say," amended the soap-boiler's wife, with a sigh. "I might stand a long time before Samuel would think of offering a chair to me; and I might spend my life-time before a door, with my hands full too, without him ever stretching out a finger to open it for me. All I'd be afraid of is

that a young man so polite as Mr. Barbour won't stay long in Limehouse."

"He does not seem to want to move, or, for that matter, indeed, to go much about London," Mrs. Perkins replied. "He has been with us now three months, and never yet seen Hyde Park. I tell him he ought to go up and pick out one of the nice young ladies in the Row; but he only laughs, and makes a jest about there being time enough before him for that."

"He'll marry a fortune, I have no manner of doubt," said Mrs. Jackson, oracularly; whereupon Mrs. Perkins bridled up a little, and said she was sure he would marry whoever "his 'art inclined him to."

"That's just what I am saying," answered the other; "the hearts of those nice young men always do incline them to look after money."

After which speech perhaps Mrs. Perkins for a time did not like Mrs. Jackson quite so well as formerly, or treat her to so many anecdotes illustrative of Lawrence's gentlemanly behaviour. Mrs. Perkins had dreamed a dream concerning the marriage of the model young man to Ada the light-haired, and she consequently did not like to hear the probability suggested of his flying at higher game.

"There's that little Sondes," was Mrs. Jackson's parting shot. "If he can do no better, likely as not he'll marry her. Me and Mr. Jackson met the whole party of them down at Grays last Sunday, walking along the road beyond the village, as demure and pleasant as you please. Missy had on the loveliest silk you ever saw on a child's back. I should not have minded having a couple of lengths of it for gowns apiece to myself and Sophy, and —"

"'There we go,' says Mr. J. to me; 'that'll be a match some day, Mattie, mark my words.'"

"I think Mr. Jackson ought to be ashamed of himself, talking about marrying and giving in marriage in the same breath with a child like that," exclaimed Mrs. Perkins.

"Why she is six months older than your own Ada," retorted Mrs. Jackson; "and we'll see how many years will go by before you are looking after a husband for her;" and the soap-boiler's wife added, when the door closed behind her visitor, "If you are not looking out already, ma'am, which it is my opinion you are."

From that day Mrs. Perkins began to urge Lawrence to "go up on Sundays to see the parks," or to walk as far as St. Paul's or Westminster to afternoon service. "I'm sure it can't be much variety for you, spending the whole day, from one o'clock, in Stepney Causeway; and you ought to take a little change, and see more of London."

To which Lawrence replied, that some afternoon he intended, with Mr. Perkins' leave, to make his way to Hyde Park.

"You'll see the ladies there going cantering, cantering," broke in that engaging child Ada, "and the grand duchesses in their yellow carriages. I went there with pa once, and I cried because he wouldn't get me a cream-coloured pony, with a long tail, the same as I saw a little boy riding on."

"Then you were a very naughty girl," said Mrs. Perkins, "and Cousin Lawrence won't take you with him when he goes to see the pretty ladies riding and driving."

In which statement Mrs. Perkins proved singularly

correct, for without praying for the companionship of any one of his relatives, Lawrence started off all by himself one Saturday afternoon to see the glories of the western hemisphere.

It was the very height of the season. Everybody who laid claim to being anybody was in London then, and that sight which all men should see once, dazzled and bewildered the senses of the country youth.

Such carriages, such horses, such numbers of great people collected together in so small a space! Like everything else in London, the equipages seemed countless, the wealth they represented fabulous.

The tremendously got-up footmen, the bewigged coachmen, the gorgeous hammer-cloths, the exquisitely dressed women! Now walking, now stopping — Lawrence took in the spectacle, and received it as a revelation of England's power, and rank, and riches.

There they went by — great family coaches, light open carriages, dainty phaetons, broughams, containing young girls, fair matrons, old dowagers, all with the stamp of money upon them. They had been born in affluence, and brought up in ease; there was about most of them that air of calm repose, of well-bred indifference which Lawrence came thoroughly to comprehend the meaning of, in time.

Amongst the multitude, there were, indeed, many who had neither been born in the purple nor rocked in silver cradles; but the majority of the people who drove by had never known what it was to work or be poor all their lives: their existence was one continual chase after pleasure — their labour was how to enjoy themselves most — their very cares were not the cares of the commonalty. Life seemed quite

another matter to them to what it did to the men and the women who regarded the grand equipages filled with fine purple merely as a very brilliant spectacle: death itself came to them delicately, over Turkey carpets, over velvet pile, through softly-closing doors, along corridors where no footfall sounded, into rooms replete with every luxury, furnished with every article, provided with every comfort which the human heart could imagine or desire.

How many times has this great show been described, and yet how rarely does any writer seem able to look at it from the plebeian side?

The girls who blushingly recognise a favoured lover, the neglected wives who would seem, for no conceivable reason, to go out to air their misery and their riches and their discontent in the parks, the heartless countesses, the handsome roués, the men who from the footpath receive smiling salutations from the occupants of magnificent equipages, are drawn over and over and over again, while the mere ordinary observers — the mass of the spectators — are never deemed worthy of a word.

Is it that the millions are outside the pale of civilisation, that there is no room for even a thought of them in that heaven where the Upper Ten Thousand dwell? Is it that there is such an intense pleasure in driving round the Serpentine as to preclude the possibility of any happiness outside the ranks of the privileged few who anticipate the delights of Paradise in Hyde Park?

Am I tedious? Hardly so, let me hope, since my hero stood without the charmed circle, an interested but not an envious spectator. The drive was to him

but as any other show, and he paused often, and looked at it intently accordingly.

"A fine sight," said some one close beside him, and turning, he found himself face to face with a young gentleman three or four years his senior, well-dressed, good-looking, pleasant-voiced, and easy-mannered; "your first view of it, I conclude?" And, as he finished, he fixed his eyes on Lawrence's face with a stare which seemed to the latter decidedly impertinent.

"Yes, it is my first view," was the reply.

"And what do you think of it all? of the chariots and horses, of the great Mammon procession, of the vestals who are all vowed to love none other god but one, of the ancient worshippers, of the grey-haired priests? It is something to see such a show, and to be able to look upon it merely as a spectacle."

The speaker stood, leaning with his back against a tree, his arms folded, and uttered the foregoing sentence while he surveyed the carriages and their owners with a look of immeasurable superiority.

There was something in the look which nettled Lawrence's temper, and induced him to make a reply relative to sour grapes, that caused the other to laugh when he heard it.

"When a man talks about the world's prizes not being worth the having, people are apt to suspect he has failed in securing them," went on Lawrence, a little warmly.

"Answering you with your own argument, I may conclude fortune has been kinder to you than the jade has proved to me," retorted the other, with a swif-

But he could not do it. He had not moral courage enough at that moment to bid Mr. Forbes encounter Mrs. Perkins and the children, and the vulgarity of the small common establishment.

Even in health he would have had to put all pride in his pocket before introducing any stranger to such a family circle as that; and now in sickness, with a dreadful depression weighing him down, with every word a pain to utter, with every breath he drew hurting him, with a terrible faint sickness coming continually over him, he was quite unable even to contemplate such a visit calmly, and so compromised matters with his own conscience by telling it Mr. Sondes' house was nearer and easier to find than Distaff Yard.

"Anything else?" asked Mr. Forbes, before he departed.

"Yes — one moment — if there is any danger, he might write to my father."

"There is no danger," said the surgeon. "There is not," he repeated, seeing Lawrence's eyes were fastened doubtfully on his face.

"Then Mr. Sondes had better see you before writing to your father," suggested Mr. Forbes. "Now, good-by. Keep up your spirits. I'll call and see how you are to-morrow," and the young man turned and left the ward accompanied by the surgeon, who having taken an amazing fancy, not to his patient, but to his patient's friend, walked with the latter as far as the outer door.

"A singular youth," he remarked. "May I ask if you have known him long?"

"No; but I have long known who he is — a son of Mr. Barbour, who was formerly owner of Malling-

ford End; and the young lady whose horse he stopped to-day is Miss Alwyn, daughter of Mr. Alwyn, of Hereford Street *and* Mallingford End, Hertfordshire."

"Bless my soul! how singular! quite romantic!" In a moment, and without tedious explanations, the surgeon recognised the peculiarity of the position. Clearly his brains did not require to be poked after and stirred up into action like the very inefficient brains of many people. "It is a hard case," he went on. "Is Mr. Barbour — our young friend, I mean — possessed of an independent income?"

"On the contrary: he has lately come to London in order to engage in business."

"He had better go back to the country," was the reply. "His chest will never stand desk work again."

"Miss Alwyn ought, in my opinion, to marry him," said Percy Forbes. "It is the least she can do, I think, under the circumstances," and a smile, which certainly was not quite pleasant, curled the young man's lips as he propounded this idea. "It is a great pity we did not take him to Hereford Street and let her nurse him through it;" and Percy laughed outright this time, while the surgeon said, inquiringly, "She was not hurt?"

"Hurt; not in the least. He got the whole benefit of the accident."

"A good horsewoman?" But Percy did not answer. He only shook hands with the surgeon and laughed again, before he went away along Piccadilly and hailed a cab, and bade the driver take him as fast as he could to Stepney Causeway.

It was late in the evening before he re
house; but he found Mr. Sondes still

dining-room with his wine untasted before him. Lawrence had promised to call on his way back from the West, and Mr. Sondes was waiting for his appearance when Mr. Forbes entered.

"I have a message for you," the gentleman stated, after the first commonplaces were over, "from a relative of yours, if I am not mistaken, — Mr. Lawrence Barbour."

"He is not my relative," answered Mr. Sondes; "but that is of no consequence. What is the message? Has the lad been getting himself into any mess?"

"He has met with an accident," answered Mr. Forbes. "He will not be able to come home to-night, nor for many nights, I fear;" and without any further preface or hesitation, he went on to tell Mr. Sondes all about his meeting with Lawrence, about the runaway horse, about the accident.

Across these details, however, Mr. Sondes cut relentlessly.

"Is he badly hurt?" he asked. "Tell me the worst, sir, I beg. Is he in danger? I am no relation. Do not be afraid to speak."

"He is in no danger; but he is very badly hurt — so badly that I do not think he can ever be very strong again. He is sadly injured about the chest."

"And he has his way to make in the world!"

"That is the worst part of the business," said Mr. Forbes. "He will never be able to sit at a desk again."

"He never has sat at a desk," retorted Mr. Sondes. "He never is likely to have to sit at one: and if it comes to that, what do you know about desks, sir?

You do not look as if you and work of any kind were very intimate acquaintances."

"Poverty makes people acquainted with strange bed-fellows," retorted Mr. Forbes. "Business and I know more of each other than you might imagine. Is there anything I can do for you at the West!" he added, rising, and holding his hat so gracefully the while, that Mr. Sondes thought him a fop, and disliked him accordingly.

Still, common politeness demanded that he should ask this man, who had taken such trouble in Lawrence's behalf, to remain and have wine, or coffee, or dinner, or something; and accordingly Mr. Sondes did press his hospitality on Percy Forbes much more earnestly than was his wont.

But nothing could induce his visitor to prolong his stay. "I have an engagement this evening I must keep," he said, and he moved towards the door, Mr. Sondes following.

"I will walk with you till you get a cab," said that gentleman, who felt perhaps that his best manner seemed a little rough to this individual, who affected the hours, and fashions, and habits of the West. "The Commercial Road is not the pleasantest street in the world for a stranger to find his way along."

They were by this time standing together in the hall, and while Mr. Sondes was looking about for his hat, Percy Forbes remarked on the beauty of the garden, which he could see through that doorway which now leads out into the wretchedest of wretched yards.

There were a few steps down from the hall to the doorway, and at the foot of the steps, framed in the dark oak, and with the green of the grass pl

bright flowers in the garden for background, stood Olivine, looking half-shyly half-curiously at the stranger.

"Your little daughter?" said Mr. Forbes, inquiringly.

"No, my niece. — Olivine, come here."

Obediently, but still slowly, she ascended the short flight of stairs. She came out of the light of the summer's evening into the dark hall, and still nestling a kitten to her heart, offered her hand at her uncle's desire to the strange gentleman.

As she did so she lifted her eyes to his face, which was frank and fearless, and handsome enough to win a child's admiration and affection.

He stroked the kitten, and he stroked her hair; then he said, looking in the sweet pensive little face, "Will you kiss me, dear?"

Without the least hesitation she put her lips to his, and kissed him as he asked her; then he bade her good-by, and walked out into the street, accompanied by her uncle, and — forgot her!

He did not imagine then, there would ever come a time when at thought of that girl his manhood would fail him — his courage and determination fade away. He could not tell then that when the years had gone by, at the very sight of Olivine his heart would be moved, and his spirit shaken like a reed; that she would grow to be more to him than any human being had ever been before, or might ever be again; that he would tremble at the touch of her hand, and change colour at the sound of her voice.

He could not foresee, as he paced slowly down Stepney Causeway and into the Commercial Road, how the events of that day were destined to be wound in

and out through every year of his future life; how they were to appear and reappear in the web of his existence, forming strange and unexpected patterns, and weaving in threads now dark, now light, as the spinning went on from day to day, and from month to month, till the work was completed, and the tale told.

See him, as he walks along, with his thick chestnut hair stirred by the evening breeze, with his brownish-grey eyes looking to right and left at the strange people and the strange place in which he found himself. See this man, whose life had been so different to Lawrence's, glancing at the locality in which my hero's lot was cast; see him, and stamp his features on your memory, for he has almost as much to do with this story as Lawrence Barbour himself.

Tall and handsome, and distinguished-looking, with waving chestnut hair, a broad square forehead, a frank kindly mouth, eyes of that wonderful brown-grey, as I have said, trim whiskers, and closely-shaven chin.

There was, however, something foppish about him; something, perhaps, a little effeminate and provoking; something almost too cool and self-possessed in his manners. Life did not appear to be life in very earnest to him. He had none of Lawrence Barbour's fierce energy and defiant resolution.

He had been brought up in a different school, and he entered that school with a different nature; yet the two never wholly lost sight of one another from that day, when, after separating from Mr. Sondes, Percy Forbes drove straight to his lodgings, arrayed himself in evening costume, and then went off to Hereford Street, where he was received by both Mr. and Miss Alwyn with, figuratively speaking, open arms.

CHAPTER X.

In Hospital.

In an essay of Pope's addressed to Sir Richard Temple, the poet alludes to the owner of a house that stood at the corner of Grosvenor Place, in lines which I quote, although they may seem for the moment to have no connection with St. George's Hospital, where Lawrence Barbour lay through the lovely summer weather, lamenting his ill-fortune, chafing over the accident that kept him still a prisoner.

Speaking of the "ruling passion," Pope says: —

> "Old politicians chew on wisdom past,
> And totter on in business to the last;
> As weak, as earnest, and as gravely out,
> As sober Lanesborough dancing in the gout."

This was the Lord Lanesborough who more than an hundred and fifty years ago sought an interview with Queen Anne, and advised her Majesty to dissipate her grief for the loss of her husband — by dancing!

This was the Lord Lanesborough who stated, on the front of his house for the information of all passers by: —

> "It is my delight to be
> Both in town and country."

This was the Lord Lanesborough who lived and danced in that mansion which formerly occupied the ground now covered by St. George's Hospital. Changes seem occasionally to have been effected almost as rapidly in former days as in our times. Queen Anne only

ascended the throne in 1702, and his lordship must have kept his residence for many a long day after that, just beyond the "Turnpike House." Yet, in 1733, St. George's was completed, being opened for the reception of patients on New Year's Day, 1734.

Opposite to the site which the hospital now occupies there was formerly one of the numerous forts which were raised by the inhabitants of London in 1642, when fears were entertained of an attack by the Royal army.

Looking at the old maps, the ancient turnpike house, which we must take as our standing point, would seem to have been perfectly in the country at the time Lord Lanesborough resided opposite Hide Park, as it was spelt in those days.

So late indeed as 1770 the hospital appears to have been entirely surrounded by country. Literally it stood in the parish of St. George's in the Fields.

Tattersall's did not begin its existence until nine years afterwards. Grosvenor Place also had still to be built, as well as Chapel and Halkin Streets, the whole of Belgravia, and Pimlico. Indeed it is only about thirty years since the Five Fields, "where robbers lie in wait," was broken up into building ground. What changes the old hospital has seen, and what changes still remain for it to see!

Tattersall's life began when St. George's had attained a respectable age, and Tattersall's is now gone; Grosvenor Place is going. Will there ever be a railway through St. George's and Rotten Row, or is that the point at which British endurance would rebel?

Still we are living now at such a pace that actually the things which are here to-day, are away to-morrow.

money still to be made? — how was the ground to be roped off — the bets booked — the race won?

True he knew the battle is not always to the strong, and so — for youth is very hopeful — he sometimes trusted things might yet go well with him. Upon the other hand, Lawrence's nature, though not melancholy, was yet like the natures of many energetic individuals, inelastic; further, his physical condition was depressing in the extreme, and oftener than I could tell, he got into straits of despondency which were most wearing to himself, and trying to those interested in his recovery.

All at once, however, there came a change. Mr. Barbour senior arrived in London in a much more desponding state of mind than even that in which it pleased Lawrence to revel, and wished to take his boy home with him.

At the very mention of this, Lawrence fired up.

Was it for a trumpery accident his father desired he should relinquish the hopes and plans of his life? Was his father dreaming when he demanded such a sacrifice? Did the doctors say he was fit for nothing but vegetating in the country? Then the doctors lied! He, Lawrence Barbour, meant to show the whole of them, relations, friends, foes, surgeons, what he could yet do in spite of his dislocated ribs and his unsound chest.

"Not win the race!" he muttered; "we shall see." And from that time forth he ceased complaining, he ceased fretting, and lay through the length of those tantalizingly fine summer days, planning, thinking, determining; more resolute, and more persistent, than ever as to his future course.

CHAPTER XI.

One of Mammon's Elect.

THERE are drawbacks to most things; a curse oftentimes walks side by side with a blessing; there are few pleasant days in life over which no cloud comes to cast a shadow, and there is scarcely any talent that can be bestowed upon man but contains within itself some corresponding disadvantage.

To cleverness perhaps the drawback is chiefly that even cleverness must have its youth. A man or woman, as a rule, cannot be like other people through boyhood or girlhood and then suddenly bud out into genius. The tree shows early what it is going to bear, and in the human subject it is apt to develope its proclivities with rather a disagreeable amount of *empressement*.

Sweet youth! innocent youth! guileless youth! trusting youth! ingenuous youth! exclaim our poets, and rhapsodize accordingly; but it never enters into the head of even the most unpractical of writers to say there is anything charming about youth if it be clever.

Somehow cleverness is not a robe which young people ever seem able to wear with humility. It is too gorgeous for them; they go about vaunting their plumage, and setting up their splendid feathers for all the world to take note of and admire. Farther, they appear to think that the Almighty has made them a rare species by themselves ant accordingly.

The consciousness of power is a fine thing; it carries a man through many an uneven way, over many a terrible obstacle; but till people have learned that even power is not everything, till they have had many a rub, many a fall, many a hard lesson, great mental strength and unusual talent are apt to make our acquaintances a trifle disagreeable. Even inferiority does not like to be ridden over roughshod. A donkey may have a tender mouth, and till the garments of genius lose a little of their pristine freshness, till their wearer ceases to be recognised by them instead of by himself, till he subdues his manner and walks soberly and discreetly along the highways of existence, till, in fact, the newness of being cleverer than his fellows ceases to oppress him, and to tinge his address with arrogance, it is to be feared that no one outside his own circle of intimate friends and relations will be much enchanted with the great future chemist, or doctor, or lawyer, or author, or engineer, or man of business.

True genius, we are occasionally told, is always modest and retiring; but if this be the case, true genius very rarely walks abroad, except in its extreme old age.

Fact is, perhaps, that precocity always tries to stand too high. It is never contented to remain in the plains, but is eternally striving to reach the hills, where sit the greybeards and the sages.

Essentially, the characteristic of youthful talent is mental loneliness; and mental loneliness is just one of those things with which ordinary humanity has no patience; for which it has no toleration.

Mediocrity resents it as a personal affront, inferiority regards it with awe and wonder, sympathy is

flung back by it, kindness fails to melt the ice; and consequently the youth, pressing onward to distinction, pursues his way in solitude, thinking the world perhaps as hard and cold, as the world thinks him disagreeable and conceited.

The world, that portion of it I mean with which Lawrence Barbour chanced at this period of his history to be thrown in contact, arrived vaguely at some such conclusions concerning my hero as those which I have been endeavouring to set forth.

He was no favourite in hospital. Neither doctors nor nurses were greatly charmed by him.

Everything that skill could do for his ailments was done, yet Lawrence made no sign of real thankfulness.

There was, however, this much to be urged on his side of the question, that he certainly was in the position of that individual whom the Irishman was employed to flog.

"Bad cess to ye," exclaimed the Hibernian, "whether I hit high, or whether I hit low, it's all the same nothing satisfies ye."

For precisely the same reason perhaps nothing thoroughly satisfied Lawrence. It was a bad business, and the surgeons could only make a patch-work affair of all their mending. As regarded Mr. Alwyn, it was his duty to come and inquire after the health of the man who lay enduring torments, because a young lady who did not know how to ride had been permitted to mount a spirited horse. Likewise, Lawrence felt that Miss Alwyn was merely performing a needful courtesy when she sent him rare flowers, and fruits, and kind messages, intermixed with many regrets.

He was wont to turn the flowers over somewhat contemptuously after Mr. Alwyn left, and to remark that he supposed they had been grown at Mallingford.

Further, he never touched the fruit, but let whomsoever would, eat it with the sublimest self-denial.

He had curious ideas on many subjects, and as he never hesitated to broach his opinions if occasion arose for his doing so, he came in time to be regarded as a singular case, not merely by reason of his injury, which was exceptional, but also because of his mental organisation, which was peculiar.

For this reason, if Lawrence did not win love, he arrested attention. His powers of endurance were so great, his capacity for suffering was so extreme, the intensity of his despair so pitiful, and the courage with which he faced the worst and defied it, so rare, that whether those around liked or disliked him, they could not help being attracted by such a nature. Strength, whether for evil or for good, energy, whether of mind or of body, has a fascination for the most of us; and this young man was so strong in all those points, wherein the majority of his fellows were weak, he had such powers in him, undeveloped though they might be, there was such a conscious superiority in the way he spoke, in the answers he returned to questions, in his bearing towards Mr. Alwyn, that even the great man himself pronounced Lawrence to be a "remarkable fellow," and professed his inability to make head or tail of him.

"He is very ugly, papa, is he not?" asked Miss

Alwyn, when he advanced this theory of Lawrence being an enigma.

Parent and child were seated at the time in the drawing-room of their house, in Hereford Street, and Mr. Alwyn, being rather given to renewed inspections of his premises, looked all round the apartment before he answered.

"No, not ugly, my dear; decidedly not ugly. Do you not remember seeing him at Mallingford? A plain young man, perhaps, but certainly not ugly."

"I remember him very well indeed," answered Miss Alwyn. "He used to be continually staring up at our pew in church, and I thought him hideous."

"No person could be hideous with such eyes as his, Etta," answered Mr. Alwyn.

"Why, what kind has he got?" inquired Miss Henrietta, who knew all about Lawrence Barbour's eyes a great deal better than her father.

"They are dark, clever, piercing eyes," replied the rich man, "eyes, that never seem to be off one's face, and that go travelling down into one's thoughts, and reading them. And he does read them, too," added Mr. Alwyn, "for he has answered me time after time according to my thoughts, rather than my words. A remarkable youth: I should not wonder if he rises to eminence some of these days."

"Now, you dear old thing, don't say that, please, don't," entreated Miss Alwyn; "I am quite weary of hearing you prophesy great things about young men who never rise at all. There's Percy Forbes, papa, what was he not to be? to what height was he not to rise, and now the handsome creature will do nothing but dance attendance on pretty girls, and is satisfied if

he can earn sufficient to keep him in gloves and perfumes. Say Lawrence Barbour will not rise, and I shall believe in him, say he is not clever, and I shall expect to see a book of his reviewed in a week's time, or to hear of his being Solicitor General, or Lord Chancellor, or something equally desirable before he is thirty."

"I cannot tell what to make of him, that I cannot."

"Then do not try to make anything, but let us see what he will turn out. Is he more grateful now for your constant visits than formerly: does he seem properly impressed at the attention you pay him?"

"Etta!"

It was very rarely Mr. Alwyn ventured to rebuke his daughter, but there certainly was a sharp reproof conveyed in his tone, which Miss Alwyn feeling, coloured, and remained silent.

"I do not consider anything we can do for him too much under the circumstances," went on Mr. Alwyn. "He risked his life to save yours, and he did save it, I have no doubt, for had Firefly once turned into Piccadilly, there is no telling what fearful injuries you might not have sustained. Lord Lallard thinks precisely the same as I do. He was at the hospital to-day when I got there, chatting away to Mr. Barbour as though he were his brother, and he walked back with me as far as the Marble Arch. He was inquiring very particularly about you, Etta, and intends to call."

"I am greatly honoured," answered Miss Etta, with a mocking courtesy. "We have been his lordship's neighbours for so long, that it is delightful to think he is going to condescend to make our acquaintance at

her. And as he thinks you are bound to be grateful for ever to the young man, and that you are doing nothing more than your duty in marching over to St. George's every day. I wonder if he would think the same had a groom snapped Finch; I wonder if he would think we ought to send fruit and flowers, and all manner of things, were a crossing-sweeper lying in Lawrence Barbour's place."

And the young lady, who was getting angry, spoke humbly and mournfully as she concluded her tirade.

"We could pension off a groom, — we could give a crossing-sweeper a sum of money ——" began Mr. Alwyn.

"I understand: and as, though the Barbours are miserably poor, they are too proud to take money, we are to go on for ever, I suppose, paying attentions to the family. We shall have to ask old Mr. Barbour to Mallingford when we go down there, and entertain the other brother, and beg Mr. Lawrence Barbour to consider this house his home. In fact we are to go through life burdened by the sense of an obligation which we can never hope to pay off, and I shall hear whispered at every turn, 'There is the young gentleman who saved Miss Alwyn's life.' I wish he had let the horse alone, I would rather have had my legs broken, or my neck broken, for that matter, than be compelled to carry such an incubus about with me."

"The real fact is, Percy has vexed you; is it not so?" said Mr. Alwyn. "He told us, to begin with, or rather he told you, that Lawrence Barbour would not come cap in hand to any man living. You were full that first night of what we were to do for the youth, of how we were to ask his father up to stay with us;

of how he must be brought over here, and I remember well Percy remarking. 'You can ask him, of course; but I do not think you will get him to take up his abode with you, for he is as proud as Lucifer, and as independent as possible.' And when I did ask him and he refused, you grew angry, and wanted me not to go to the hospital any more. You are not right in this matter, Etta; though you are my daughter, I must say I think you are wrong."

"Well, you have said it, so let us talk no more about him. Next thing I suppose you will be wanting *me* to go to St. George's."

"Percy said you ought," mildly suggested Mr. Alwyn.

"I wish Percy Forbes and Lawrence Barbour were both sewn up in a sack and at the bottom of the Thames," retorted Miss Alwyn, and she rose as she spoke and apparently in order to put an end to the discussion went over to her piano and commenced singing.

Seated afar off, Mr. Alwyn sat and listened and beat time with his head and fingers; but his thoughts were not with the music so much as with the singer, his only child, of whom he was proud and yet afraid — whom he loved a vast deal more than she loved him.

Let me try to sketch them both for you as they were then — father and daughter; the rich man, and the solitary creature who was near and dear to him on earth.

Mr. Alwyn was one of those men who never by any chance seem to unbend. Easy chairs had no attraction for him; if by chance he selected one he did

not lean back in it like anybody else, but sat rather bent forward a little, with his legs apart, and his feet firmly planted on the carpet.

No human being had ever seen Mr. Alwyn lying on a sofa, neither was it in the memory of any, even of his oldest acquaintances that they had beheld him resting with his arm upon a chimney-piece. When he stood, he stood upright, when he sat, he never stretched out his limbs, nor lolled in a chair, nor took his ease in any way.

People said Mr. Alwyn had too much money to be able to take his ease, and perhaps this assertion was correct. His money was a great trouble to Mr. Alwyn, as money always is to those who are reported to have more of it than is actually the case.

Mr. Alwyn was rich, very rich; but the world called him a millionaire, and therein the world was wrong. He had not made his money easily, he had not made it perfectly honestly. His hands were not so clean as they had been thirty years before: he had not found the ways of commerce, ways of pleasantness; and emphatically he had not found its paths those of peace.

He had not exactly risen from the ranks, he was not one of those men who, coming into London hatless and shoeless, are borne out of the great Babylon to one of the "silent cities" in a hearse with nodding plumes, amid the noise of much lamentation and weeping. On the contrary, his father had been in business before him, and his grandfather before that. He sprang from a class which finds it much harder to get on in the world than a class infinitely lower, because the members composing it are fettered in the earlier stages

of their career by the opinions of the clique in which they live, and move, and have their being.

The lad who has swept out an office, and eaten without any feeling of shame, but rather with an appreciative relish, three pennyworth of beefsteak pudding, rides a light-weight in the race for wealth, against the man who has always associated respectability with rates and taxes; who believes in keeping up a certain appearance, who has many pulls on his purse and more on his temper, who regards the opinions of those about him, who considers a certain amount of furniture and a given style of dress indispensable, and who mounts the business steed, cumbered by prejudices and fears, and oppressed by much gentility.

Given two boys, with equal push and ability, — the one the son of nobody, who keeps your crossing clean, and who, when he shuts up shop, by, as it has been neatly put, "sweeping the mud up on the pavement," goes away to sleep in some wretched lodging; and the other, the son of a man earning three, or four, or five hundred a year, shall we say; put them out in life the one as errand-boy, the other as junior-clerk: which of these has the best chance of success?

The one is educated; the other is not; — the one is socially much higher than his fellow; the other is but, in the world's estimation, as the mud he once swept aside from his crossing; — the one has friends to help him; the other must take his leaps for himself; — the one apparently has far the best chance; the other has, so far as can be seen, every circumstance dead against him; — and yet, look you, the poor boy gets the lead of the race, because he is not weighted unduly; because he has been able to steal a-head, while

no one was thinking of him — no one criticising how he rode.

The rates and the taxes, the eating and drinking, the clothing and servants, the opinions of friends, the ideas of society, — all tend to keep a man of the middle class in the valley of mediocrity all his life. He is influenced by his surroundings: his next door neighbour is a person of consequence in his eyes, — Mrs. Grundy a power which he fears to ignore.

Mrs. Grundy had, all his life, stood between Mr. Alwyn and comfort. From his youth upward, that typical female had exercised a baneful influence on his happiness, and in his latter years, when wealth and abundance had been gained, and something far and away more than competence secured, Mr. Alwyn still allowed the maxims of that disagreeable individual to influence his conduct, her ideas to affect his mode of life.

Society was pleased, as I have said, to call Mr. Alwyn a millionaire, and Mr. Alwyn did not contradict society. He knew as well as anybody on earth, that if he were, as some people facetiously remarked, one of Mammon's elect, he had not as yet entered into the kingdom. He was perfectly well aware that, while the world thought he was not living up to anything like his income, it yet would have puzzled his wits greatly had anything occurred to compel him to increase his expenditure. He had visible wealth — he had a fair house in town, well and handsomely furnished — he had pictures — he had statuettes — he had men-servants and women-servants — he had Mallingford, where were gardeners, and gamekeepers, and grooms, and more men and more women — he had

carriages and horses — he entertained liberally — he was not niggardly about giving to the poor and the needy.

All this he was able to do — able without running any risk, without spending a penny beyond what was justifiable to accomplish; but the world thought, because they saw so much wealth, that the man was about twice as wealthy as happened actually to be the case.

If Mr. Alwyn ventured to hint he was not so rich as people took him to be, his assertion was received either with polite incredulity or laughed at as a capital joke. "Not wealthy, my dear fellow? you are only *too* wealthy," was the usual reply; and Mr. Alwyn, like many others, had to bow his head beneath the weight of the crown which was forced upon him.

CHAPTER XII.

Hereford Street.

THE reader who follows this story to the end will find that the young lady whom we left in the last chapter seated at her piano, plays an important part in it, and exercises a considerable influence on the fortunes and happiness of the hero.

After this statement, no apology can be considered necessary for devoting a few pages to Miss Alwyn, and the house which you will be asked many a time to enter before the "Race for Wealth" is ended, and the goal of completion reached.

There is one glory of the sun and another of the moon, and there is also one style of beauty among women which is angelic and another which is — not.

Miss Alwyn's beauty was, as Percy Forbes remarked in after days, not the beauty of an angel, nor of a woman, but of a devil.

It is painful to hear hard words used concerning a lady, and not to be able to contradict them; but what he said chanced unfortunately to be true. She was beautiful exceedingly, fascinating beyond all powers of description; and yet her beauty was not a thing to be desired or coveted. Her fascination was of that kind from which all honest men might pray God to deliver them.

There are faces that we do not take to much at first; from which instinct — so much more reliable in its warnings than sense ever is in its assurances — bids us flee; and Henrietta Alwyn's was one of these.

But still the majority of men did not flee: they turned to take another look, and were lost. For the singular eyes attracted them — the hair, which Percy said was like the coils of a snake, entangled them; her smile bewitched, her manner intoxicated them; and he who once passed through the ordeal of loving Henrietta Alwyn, never came forth from it quite scatheless — quite the same as he had been before.

She was young, too — only one-and-twenty. Had Percy Forbes ever spoken freely about her to any one in those days, he would have added, "And, my God, what will she be when she is old?"

Heart, and soul, and body, she was a flirt; not an innocent harmless flirt, like many a girl who settles down after a time into a sufficiently sober and discreet matronhood — but a flirt ingrain, a flirt who did not care at what price her success was purchased, what

tears flowed, what wounds were inflicted, so as she was satisfied — she triumphant.

She had her grievance against society; but whatever of pain and mortification she had received, she paid back through the years with interest.

She had not been born in the purple, and the purple was slow about recognising her merits.

She had received slights: great ladies had been insolent to her, as only, perhaps, great ladies know how.

They had wounded her pride — they had criticised her manners — they had refused to admit her into the holy of holies. "Fast" was not a word much in vogue in the days of which I am writing, but Miss Alwyn was considered the equivalent of fast, and looked coldly on accordingly.

Therein, however, society made a mistake — as great a mistake as it made about Mr. Alwyn's wealth.

Could Miss Alwyn have gone a pace, there is no doubt but she would gladly have astonished all the dowagers of her acquaintance; but there were so few things of the nature of speed within her reach, that perforce she was obliged to travel quietly enough along the road of life.

She could not drive; she dare no more have attempted to guide a pair of ponies even from Mallingford to the station, than she could have flown. If there was one thing she earnestly desired, it was nerve and skill sufficient to enable her to become a good whip and a good rider. She had persisted in attempting to manage a horse, spite of her own fears and the warnings of those who were learned in such matters. She had her ambition and her weakness, and both had received a severe shock, when she and Firefly and Law-

rence Barbour lay in a heap together within the sight of Piccadilly.

She desired to do everything well, and there were many things which she could not do at all.

Discovering this, she bemoaned her fate at not having been rich from her youth upwards, at not having been put on a pony in her infant days; in not having been used to horses all her life; in not having moved in the best society from her childhood; in not having been taught by the greatest artists how to play like Thalberg, and sing like Grisi.

"God is very good," Percy Forbes was wont to tell her; "if you had been too perfect, you would not have given any other woman a chance. No doubt it was wisely ordered, or we might all have been too fond of you."

And then Etta would flash round on him, and answer —

"Have you not been too fond of me, Percy? Have you not —"

"Yes; I plead guilty," he was wont to reply: "but I will never be too fond of you again, Hetty. Make yourself quite easy on that score, for I never will."

"I wonder at you, Percy; I wonder how you dare —"

"And so do I, sweetest, wonder how I ever escaped with life; wonder how, loving you as I once did, I ever can have come to love you not at all. Spare your pains, Hetty; keep your trouble for some one else, for I vow to you, I vow and I declare — you might as well try now to touch the heart of the dead, as the heart of Percy Forbes."

"Your heart is not dead," she would answer, scornfully.

"And did I say it was? Did you desire to kill me altogether? Did you want not to leave me a chance of escape, not even a little city to flee unto? Dearest Hetty, you are very beautiful, but you are also very wicked, and very cruel; as I said before, the Almighty has been good to mankind in not suffering you to have too much power over weak saints like myself."

They quarrelled, this pair; quarrelled eternally; and yet Henrietta was fond of Percy Forbes, and would fain have kept him at her feet for ever.

It was a sight to see the pair wrangling and disputing, — to behold how coolly Percy caught all her sneers and flung them back at her, — how she got crimson with passion, and, while she hurled taunts at him, dilated with a rage which she was impotent to express.

She was tall, and had a glorious figure; she had a skin as white and as pure as the flower of a lily; she had got masses of black hair, which hung in curls over neck and shoulders — in twining curls, that seemed to have life in them, that were, as Percy said, less like the flowing locks of a woman than the coils of a snake. She had small hands and feet, her head was well set on, and she bore herself with a haughty and defiant carriage.

She had regular features: a somewhat large mouth, with full, red lips, and eyes — what colour were her eyes? — that kept changing, changing like a cat's, as the varying light fell upon them.

Women she did not like, and, for that matter, she professed not to like men either; but women certainly

were her abhorrence, and the lady who presided over the establishment in Hereford Street, and who was *chaperone*, companion, housekeeper, all in one, could have testified to the truth of Henrietta's statement out of the fullness of her own experience.

Further, she might have added that women did not like Miss Alwyn; which was the less to be wondered at, if the saying that love begets love be correct.

Very vague and very shadowy are these figures on my paper. It is merely the negatives which have been taken, but perhaps as the story proceeds the faces and the forms may grow more distinct, and stand out clearly as photographs before the eye of the reader.

It was after the fashion of photographs that father, and daughter, and house, came to be stamped in time on the memories of Lawrence Barbour and Percy Forbes.

Many a man and many a woman came and went and faded out of their recollection, but the features of Mr. Alwyn and his daughter never grew faint or cloudy on their mental canvas.

There were dwellings, once familiar, which became as strange habitations to them in the course of years, and streets that their feet once traversed frequently, grew in time to be forgotten localities; but Hereford Street, and the house therein, where Henrietta and her father abode, remained as ink upon paper, as carving on a rock, with both men to the end.

It is not likely that Hereford Street is a region of the West End well known to many who read these pages. It was never much of a thoroughfare, running as it did parallel with Oxford Street.

Running as it did! for alas! here, too, all is changed: where there were houses there is now a space of waste

ground; the south side of the street is demolished, and where Mr. Alwyn's opposite neighbours lived and died, ate and drank, married and gave in marriage, feasted and fasted, there is at this moment a little tract of desert land enclosed with low wooden palings looking wretched and desolate in the twilight.

Part of the north side remains for the present intact, but changed almost past recognition.

The front-doors of the former time are the back-doors of the present; entrances have been made from Oxford Street, and the dining-rooms of the years gone by are filled with goods and desecrated by the voices of buyers and sellers.

Still, however, the house is standing where Mr. Alwyn lived and was great; and if a man be at all imaginative, he may, in the evening firelight, people the now deserted rooms with their former inhabitants. He can fancy that the years have not gone by, bringing changes with them; he can listen for the stopping of carriages at doors that only now open to take in the milk; he can assign one apartment to this purpose and another to that; he can fill the balconies with flowers, and see the guests trooping down the stone staircase to dinner; he can assign a corner at the end of the drawing-room to the grand piano; he can place couches on each side the hearth; he can wait for the ladies coming up from an apartment hung with crimson flock-paper on the ground-floor, where a repast, not *à la Russe*, has just been served; he can pass through a much ornamented door-way, and peep into what was once a sleeping-chamber beyond; he can see the old-fashioned four-poster, hung with heavy draperies, and look at his own face in the mirror placed between the windows,

in which beauty was wont to smile at the reflection of her own loveliness.

There are still the much ornamented ceilings, — still the richly-carved doorways, — still the mouldings, the cornices, the marks of where pictures have been hung, the old old-fashioned chimney-pieces, where sienna is let into the white slab, and carried round the edges of the fireplace. There are the marble hearths, and the high grates of former days; there is the imitation-oak staining on the floor, marking just where the carpet was laid; there is the skirting round the room, finished off with much care, and a vast amount of moulding; there are the panelled doors; there is carving everywhere — on the wainscot, on the window-shutters, on the entablatures and jambs of the doorways. What more could a dreamer desire than to sit in such a room, in the firelight, and bid the men and the women who formerly peopled it appear again unto him?

They come out of the gloom! out of the darkness, they come and stand in groups about the hearth, laughing, chatting, flirting as of old. They come, and he looks in their faces, and sees those in their youth who are now old, those old who are now dead.

He recalls the hopes and the fears, the joys and the sorrows of each; hopes never fulfilled, and forgotten fears that will trouble them no more; joys that have passed away, sorrows that they have taken to the grave with them.

Love, despair, anger, remorse, laughter, tears — all these have found a resting-place within the walls, that are now bare of life.

Let us away, friends, let us away from the house that now is, to the house that was; let us rise and out

the phantom host to rout with the presence of honest flesh and blood; let us leave the deserted rooms to the spectres of the past, and enter them no more, save when they are furnished and inhabited, with the men and the women who have each in this story a part to play out.

So! darkness is settling down upon the passages and the landing as we walk forth from the drawing-room, and pass down the stairs, and when we close the hall-door, which is now so seldom opened, behind us, and steal out into the saddening twilight, we leave the old house empty, and the once cheerful apartments without a living thing in them to take away the sense of desolation utter and complete!

CHAPTER XIII.

Minor Troubles.

THROUGH the glorious summer weather Lawrence Barbour lay in hospital.

Into the wards of St. George's the sun streamed brightly; from the windows of the hospital the convalescents could see Hyde Park and the Queen's gardens full of leaf, and green with verdure. The Row was by no means deserted; the Drive was thronged day after day with carriages; along Piccadilly and down the Knightsbridge Road the stream of human life poured continually; the water-carts spread a pleasant coolness on the streets as they went by; there were trucks full of flowers that looked gay in the middle of the London thoroughfares; whichever way one turned there were cool muslins and light silks and white straw

bonnets; the parks were alive with children; there was no frost, no mud, no fog; the pleasantest time of all the year to be in the Great Babylon had come; the best season for seeing London, its palaces, its churches, its squares, its bridges, its docks, its shipping, its river, its long, long lines of streets, its suburbs, its crowded resorts, had arrived; but still Lawrence lay, as I have said, in hospital, creeping his way back by slow degrees to comparative health.

That was a part cut out of his life; he learned no useful lesson; he acquired no sweet virtue; he failed both in patience and gratitude. It was a blank page on which, in the after days, he never could perceive that any beneficial line had been traced.

Thankless and uneasy, he often turned his tired eyes towards the light, murmuring, "Would it not have been better, O Lord, to have taken me at once than to leave me to drag on my life thus?" but he never, at any stage of his illness, so far bowed his heart as to say, "God's will be done."

Well, it was hard. There is nothing harder than to bear; and that was all the work Lawrence had set him to do at the time of which I am writing.

He was young, and the young always grudge the loss of even an hour of their existence. He was naturally active, and it is not easy for an active man to lie by with equanimity. He was willing to work, and the sole labour allotted to him was idleness. Morning after morning the sun rose and shone into the wards; day after day the summer brightness gladdened the London streets: patients went and came continuously; men left their legs behind them, and departed; had their arms set, and were made sound again: reco-

effects of frightful accidents, and walked away in company with their friends; but still he lay on, and thought his thoughts, and bore his pain in silence.

Visitors not a few came and sat by him. Mr. Alwyn did his duty of course; and Lord Lallard was very kind and considerate to the son of his old neighbour, calling in often to cheer him up with news of the outer world, and asking him to go down and stay at Lallard Park for a time, whenever he was able to travel.

Mr. Barbour did not return to town after his first visit. Travelling was expensive, and his interviews with Lawrence had not, as a whole, been productive of pleasure or satisfaction to either; he resented Mr. Alwyn's attempts to force his hospitality on him as insolent condescension, and Mr. Perkins's well-meaning proffers of friendship as impertinent familiarity.

He had told his son he considered starvation preferable to such association, and entreated him to return home. To which Lawrence had answered, "Each one to his taste; for my part, I had rather beg in the London streets, than go mouching in idleness about the Clay Farm as I used to do."

After a very few such passages, Mr. Barbour wended his sorrowful way back to Mallingford, feeling that the business taint brought into the blood of his family by Miss Perkins would never be obliterated; and when on the following Sunday a sermon was delivered on "Original Sin," the disappointed gentleman associated in his own mind the fall of Adam and the marriage of his great-grandfather with the drysalter's daughter.

He turned his hopes next on Edmund, who certainly had developed no trading propensities, but this was un-

fortunately rather because he was idle, than because he was proud; rather because he detested work of any kind, than because he desired to push himself on, and rise to eminence in any other pursuit or profession.

Lawrence was the son who could have brought green leaves and goodly fruit on the bare and barren family tree — Lawrence, and he would not! He had chosen his own road in life, and was resolved to follow it to the end! What wonder that Mr. Barbour left London disgusted and disappointed, and tried to forget that evil for which indeed there seemed no remedy?

He had his paternal feelings however, nevertheless, and wrote frequently to his first-born, pressing on him to come home for a time; at least, till his health should be re-established.

Mr. Sondes — the only person Mr. Barbour had seen in London whom he could endure, and in whose house, far east though it might be, he had been good enough to stay — answered these letters on behalf of the patient, and softened down, as he wrote, all those harshnesses of expression for which Lawrence was famous.

In due time, also, Edmund managed to scrape together enough money to come up and see London and the invalid. Which spectacle he enjoyed most, it would perhaps be invidious to inquire.

As for the Perkinses, there was neither beginning nor end of them, for Mrs. Perkins, greatly to Lawrence's distress, considered it incumbent upon her to visit him in his affliction, and made up little parties for the purpose of inducing him to, as she phrased it, "forget his troubles a bit."

In this laudable object Mrs. Perkins succeeded to

admiration. No other person who ever entered St. George's ever caused Lawrence so thoroughly to lose all sense of his bodily ailments as the chemist's wife.

She called him a "poor dear," and kissed him with motherly demonstrativeness. She sat with his hand in hers till both got clammy and wet, when Lawrence could endure such marks of affection and attention no longer. She brought him the most wonderful cakes, the most astonishing delicacies, the stalest of fruits. She wore hideous bonnets, and either a white or a crimson shawl; she had always a child with her: in fact, the children looked upon Lawrence's illness as something rather agreeable and productive of excitement, and were much vexed and troubled in spirit when, by reason of his recovery, the pleasant pilgrimages to Hyde Park Corner ceased.

Sometimes Mrs. Jackson accompanied her friend, and then indeed Lawrence wondered why women so ugly were allowed to live, why women with such tongues were not gagged and got rid of.

Ada, too, assisted at these ceremonies with great vivacity and loquacity. At an early stage of the proceedings, viz., on the occasion of her first visit, she climbed up on the bed, thereby occasioning Lawrence such agony that he damned the engaging child so heartily and loudly, as to bring the nurse to his side, and cause the whole ward to be convulsed with smothered laughter.

He endeavoured subsequently to apologize to Mrs. Perkins for his warmth, but his excuses were unnecessary — Mrs. Perkins having already taken his part to the extent of threatening to inflict punishment on Miss Ada when she got her home, and of declaring to the

offender that she would tell her "par of her goings on," who would never, never let her come to see her "poor, dear, sick cousin again."

"Now, if she only holds to that," thought Lawrence, while Ada put up her shoulders and dropped her under lip, and swelled out her cheeks, and got very red in the face: all preparatory signs of a thorough good sobbing fit.

"If you let her cry, you will both be turned out," exclaimed Lawrence, wildly regardless of whether there were any truth in his statement or not; "they won't allow any noise here." Whereupon Ada was desired to behave herself, and gulped back her grief accordingly.

Unhappily for Lawrence, however, Mrs. Perkins did not prove as good as her word, for she brought Ada, not merely again, but frequently; and Ada invariably came into the ward bearing in her hands a huge bunch of flowers, which she presented to her cousin.

These flowers were scentless, limp, and long-gathered, as it is the nature of London flowers — of the commoner sort — to be; further, the stalks were were wet and sticky, which last fact was to be attributed to the persistency with which Ada had eaten sweets all the way in the Blackwall omnibus which conveyed her and her mother from Limehouse to Piccadilly.

Then there were occasional incursions of the younger children, who surveyed Lawrence with astonished interest, and asked Mrs. Perkins, —

"What made his face so white, like chalk, and his eyes so big, and his bones so plain, and his voice so queer?"

"Is he soon going to die?" asked the youngest but

stance, he could not have voluntarily escorted Mrs. Perkins up Piccadilly. In this respect Percy had the advantage over him, and perhaps Lawrence did not like his new friend any the better for it. Nevertheless, the two young men had become friends after a fashion, and spent a considerable amount of time talking together on various subjects.

Mr. Sondes also often travelled westward to see his *protégé*, and never entered St. George's without a lovely bouquet, hidden away in moss, which Olivine sent to Lawrence with her love.

Those were the sweetest flowers that reached the sick man in his extremity — pure, and fresh, and sweet, and cool, and simple; not too rare to touch, not overpowering in their rich fragrance; not arranged to order by the hands of a gardener who tied them up with bass, as was the case with the bouquets from Mallingford, but just a sprig or two, a few buds nestling among moss, grateful to the sense, refreshing to the eye, green and bright as though that moment gathered, grouped together simply yet daintily, as it was in the child's nature to group everything which her hands touched.

She lived in the country all through the hot summer weather, in an old-fashioned house down by the river edge, some five-and-twenty miles from town; and the flowers and the moss told tales to the invalid lying in hospital, of the fields and the trees which he was debarred from seeing.

Not that Lawrence loved the country much, or sighed greatly after its delights; only, when he was restless and feverish the flowers seemed to talk to him of rest and shade, just as the sound of running water

is grateful at times to a man who, it may be, loves best to drink wine.

One cannot tell how or why these things make any impression on apparently unimpressionable people; we only know the effect is produced, and wonder to remark it. And the effect produced on Lawrence Barbour was to make him long almost passionately to get out of hospital, to flee away, not to Lallard Park, nor to Mallingford-End, nor to Clay Farm, nor to Ramsgate, as Mr. Perkins suggested, but to Grays, where Mr. Sondes had a house that commanded a view of the river, and from which you could see the ships going up and down with their sails all set and shining in the morning sunshine.

Now Lawrence had never seen the river, except from London or some of the other bridges, and once from Grays, on that occasion mentioned by Mrs. Jackson to Mrs. Perkins. He had never sat beside a window idly looking over a great expanse of water: never beheld the sun rising upon and setting over it; never watched it in storm and calm, in daylight and in the deepening twilight. He was not an imaginative man; but he had every element in him for becoming a solitary one; and therefore it happened, perhaps, that in his sickness the idea took firm hold of his mind if he could but get away to Grays he should soon be restored to health, — to comparative health, as has before been said. He wanted to run off from London, to be clear of Mr. Alwyn, and Mrs. Perkins, and doctors, and nurses, and diet, and the sight of illness and suffering; he was sick of the hot days and of the hotter nights; he longed for the river breeze, for the cool bedchamber, for the cool grass, for the fresh

come and fan his temples. And so the days went by — the days and the weeks; and late on in the summer he walked feebly out of St. George's — cured.

CHAPTER XIV.

A little Surprise.

CURED! Very bitterly Lawrence Barbour repeated that word to himself as he drove along Piccadilly and across Leicester Square, and so by the Strand and through the City back to Limehouse.

He felt giddy with the unwonted motion of the cab; the noise of the streets irritated his nerves. By the time he had reached Tichbourne Street he was faint and sick and weary, but still, cured. The doctors had done all they could for their patient — given him what measure of health it was in their power to bestow, and discharged him sound and strong as it was likely he would ever be.

The human machine had been repaired to the uttermost; the instrument had been put in such tune as was possible after the jar it had sustained; but the machine could never work again so smoothly as had once been the case, the instrument might never more give forth so strong a tone as formerly, let the man's life be long or let it be short.

"And this is being cured," he said, feebly, as the cab jolted along over the stones down King William Street and so into the Strand. "This is being cured. Last time I passed this way I was well and strong as anybody need to be; I did not know what it was to have ache or pain, and now — the clothes in which I

left Limehouse *that* day are literally hanging upon me, and I could not walk even from your house to Stepney Causeway if I were offered all the gold in the Bank of England for doing so."

"You will mend of that," answered Mr. Perkins, cheerily. Mr. Perkins had come to fetch his relative out of the hospital, and now sat beside him in the cab. "You will mend of that. You must eat well, and drink well, and get away either to Ramsgate or Grays; and then after that we will talk about your being cured, but not till then. You have had a nasty bout of it, and we must try to repair the damage done to your constitution."

"If Mrs. Perkins break a tea-cup she can send Jane out to buy another; but can she ever make the old cup sound again?" demanded Lawrence, peevishly.

"No," answered Mr. Perkins; "nobody ever thought she could; only, you see, the difference in this case is that you are not a tea-cup. It is dead and you are living; it is inanimate matter, with no physical power of repairing a waste; you are animate, and therefore have within yourself the capacity for acquiring fresh strength, for knitting broken bones, for making in course of time, in fact, a sound body out of an injured one. What is the use of looking at the worst side of things? If you were eighty the question might indeed be a different one; but you are young, healthy, naturally of a strong constitution, with good blood in your veins, and good sense in your head. Make use of that sense now, and ask yourself whether it is reasonable to suppose a man who has been in hospital for so long would feel strong enough to ride a steeple-chase the first day he gets out into the open air. The thing is

absurd. Wait, as I have said, for a month, and then tell me how you feel about being broken up for life."

"But the doctors warned me," began Lawrence.

"Never mind their warnings," interrupted Mr. Perkins, "or at least only take them for what they are worth. Doctors are not infallible; doctors are not God Almighty, and no one but He can say for certain what time and rest and patience may not do for you yet. It is just possible," went on the chemist, with a delightful inconsistency, "that your chest may never be quite strong again; but what of that? How many people are going about the world now with delicate chests. How many have only a piece of a lung left to breathe through, and yet keep themselves alive winter after winter —"

"Ay, keep themselves alive" commented Lawrence, "I had rather be dead at once, than feel my breath pulling me back every step I took."

"But you have got both your lungs, and although they may not be very strong now, still —"

"Still the cracked cup lasts a long time if it be not much used," finished Lawrence. "That is the worst of it, Mr. Perkins; with my bread to win, with my way to make, I shall have to keep the fact of my broken health always in mind. Well, so be it; I have made my last complaint, I have uttered my last moan. I accept the inevitable, and will try to make the best of a bad bargain."

"That is right," remarked Mr. Perkins, "you will not find the bargain so bad an one after all. Are you getting very tired? It is an awful long drive for you to take for a beginning."

What Mr. Perkins said was perfectly true, and by the time Lawrence reached Distaff Yard, he felt glad enough to crawl up-stairs and go straight away to bed.

"This is nice," he observed, as he laid his head on the pillow in his own little room again, — "this is nice," and that was the first approach to a really grateful speech Mr. Perkins had heard him utter. "Do you want me to eat?" he added, "and I so comfortable." But he raised himself up for all that, and swallowed what Mr. Perkins gave him; and afterwards his relative closed the door and ordered the children down-stairs, and left Lawrence to go to sleep.

"Oh! the blessedness of that sleep — the happiness of lying with his eyes shut, all alone — the pleasure of waking, and not finding one on his right hand, and another on his left, suffering, and making lamentation.

It was late in the evening when he awoke, and then he only did so sufficiently to assure himself there was really no other occupant of the room, after which he dropped off to sleep again.

"Thank God," was his latest conscious thought, "that when we take our rest for the last time, we shall each have a separate coffin." It was a strange idea to come into a young man's head; but then Lawrence Barbour was a strange young man, who had been much accustomed to solitude all his life, to whom nothing seemed so perfectly unendurable as having people always about him, and who spoke merely the simple truth the next morning when he told Mrs. Perkins he had never enjoyed anything so much before, as past night's sleep in Distaff Yard.

"And I am sure it has done you a world of good," answered Mrs. Perkins; "and now, don't you think, my dear, you could persuade Josiah to let you and me and the children go down to Ramsgate or Southend all together comfortably? It would be ever so much better for you to be with us than moping in that dull house at Grays, alone with Mr. Sondes and Olivine. There would be some life about my children, but nobody ever saw a bit of life about her — not that I mean to say Olivine is not a nice little girl enough, considering the unchristian way in which she has been brought up — but still cheerfulness is one thing and melancholy is another. My poor father used always to be singing 'Away with melancholy,'" concluded Mrs. Perkins, commencing forthwith to hum that remarkably difficult air all out of tune.

Lawrence made no answer. He lay still, considering that, if he went to the seaside with Mrs. Perkins and Ada, the journey might be considered an unnecessary expense. "I could go to Bedlam when I came back," he decided, "but certainly to no other place."

He pictured to himself Ada scampering about the sands, and shuddered, as in a prophetic vision he saw her thick legs, her light hair, her upturned nose, her blue eyes, her forward manners, and her eternal giggle astonishing the Ramsgate visitors. Already he felt the weight of Mrs. Perkins' hand as she took hold of his arm, down whatever public promenade that place might boast. It was all very well to do the agreeable to Mrs. Perkins at Limehouse, but even to propose to his own mind the idea of doing the agreeable to Mrs. Perkins anywhere out of the locality in which her hus-

band carried on his business was a thing not to be thought of.

Having decided this point by the time Mrs. Perkins had dusted his looking-glass, and shaken his toilet-cover, and put the room what she called "to rights," Lawrence informed her he could not possibly get off going to Mrs. Sondes', that he had promised to spend some time at Grays, whenever he was strong enough to travel anywhere.

"Oh! dear," exclaimed Mrs. Perkins, standing in the centre of the room, the very personification of household uncomeliness, and holding her duster tightly in her hand, and looking most grievously annoyed while she spoke, "Oh! dear; then there's no chance of me and the poor children getting away for a breath of fresh air before the summer is over. Mr. Perkins would have let us go, if you had gone, but now — but there, what is the use of talking about it? That Mr. Sondes is the antidote, or bane, or whatever you call it, of my life. There is nothing I want he does not put his foot in somehow. I don't blame you, of course; but it is provoking, now, confess yourself, isn't? Here I am month after month, slave, slave, slave — worse than any negro. I am sure I earn every bite and sup crosses my lips. What other woman with a family like mine, and Josiah in business on his own account, would do with only one servant, and her a fool! I cook, and iron, and have his food always wholesome and hot, and the children have never a hole in their stockings, and the house is as clean as a new pin, and I am up every morning as soon as the men get to work; but I might just as well be a slut and a lie-a-bed, and wa[illegible]ra-vagant, for all the thanks I have. It is

doing — all — every bit. Likely as not he knew I wanted to go to Ramsgate or Southend, and made up his mind I shouldn't. He knows everything, — perhaps what I am saying to you at this present minute. Well, let him know then; listeners never hears no good of themselves," said Mrs. Perkins, by way of ending to her speech, which had got not merely illogical, but ungrammatical towards its conclusion, by reason of the vehemence of her feelings. "They never does," and Mrs. Perkins aimed a blow at an imaginary cobweb depending from the ceiling, while Lawrence remarked, —

"That he was positive if Mr. Perkins knew she wanted to go out of town, he would make no objection to her doing so," to which straightforward speech Mrs. Perkins made answer, "Much you know about it, — much you know about what husbands object to; not but what, in his way, Josiah is good enough in the main, only I would rather never set foot beyond the doors, than worry and torment like some wives. I don't want to go out often. I had just as lief stay here, but the children, poor dears, will be disappointed; ay, that they will."

Now what was Lawrence to do? He felt guiltily conscious in the matter, so conscious, in fact, that he said, after a pause and a struggle, —

"Mrs. Perkins, if you wish so much to go to Ramsgate, and can only get there if I accompany you, I will explain the state of the case to Mr. Sondes, and —"

"No, thank you, Mr. Barbour;" she interrupted; "I don't want to be under no obligations to Mr. Sondes for nothing; and it is of no consequence to me —

further than wishing you well, and thinking your visit to a person who wants to marry you to his niece a mistake — where you go to stay, whether in that dismal old house at Grays, or in nice genteel lodgings at Ramsgate, or, well, say — Southend."

"Marry me to his niece," Lawrence repeated. He never heard a word after that clause of the sentence. Mrs. Perkins's telling contrasts had been lost upon him.

"Marry me to his niece! what niece?"

"What niece? — why Olivine; he has no other that ever I heard of."

"But she is only a child."

"I know that she is only a child now, but she will be a woman some day, if she lives long enough."

"And I, if I ever do marry, will not until I am forty."

"Trust you for that," observed Mrs. Perkins.

"You may trust me, for I have a notion that when people marry so young they get tired of it, somehow; besides, Mr. Sondes would not want a pauper as I am for a nephew-in-law. I do wish, Mrs. Perkins, you would put that notion out of your mind. I cannot imagine how it ever got there."

"It is not into my mind alone it has got, let me tell you," answered Mrs. Perkins. "There's Mrs. Jackson (a sensible woman she is, too) as is quite of my opinion. She said no later than last night, setting comfortably over her tea, and me on the other side of the table listening to her — 'Mark my words, Mrs. Perkins,' she says, 'that'll be a match some day.'

"'What'll be a match?' I asked, knowing all the time who she meant.

"'Why, between your young gentleman,' she says, 'and little Sondes.'"

"I wish to heaven Mrs. Jackson would mind her own business, and leave mine alone," said Lawrence, angrily.

"But she is just like her neighbours, and people won't leave your business alone," answered Mrs. Perkins.

"Well, then, they shall hold their tongues to me about it," he retorted. "How would you, Mrs. Perkins, like any one to say that you wanted to marry me to Ada?"

In a moment Lawrence perceived the error he had committed; in an instant he saw that such a report would not have been far from the truth; and he hurried on without waiting for any reply,

"The one thing is quite as absurd as the other; I have got my way to make in the world, to grow rich and independent; by the time my hair is grey I may think of taking to myself a wife, but I do not mean to clog my steps at present. And another thing I am confident of, is, that Mr. Sondes will either expect his niece to marry high or not at all."

But, although he said this, Mr. Lawrence Barbour's vanity was flattered at the idea of being considered already eligible. Two future brides growing up for him; a mother and an uncle deciding that it would be a "good match" for their girls. Vanity is a feeling easily awakened, difficult to kill; and Mrs. Perkins had something to answer for in making this youth look favourably on his own perfections.

He had heard of men educating wives for themselves; why should Mr. Sondes not desire to educate a

husband for his niece? After all, might there not be a grain of truth at the bottom of Mrs. Perkins's bushel of chaff. It was pleasant to him to think so, at all events, and though he professed to be very indignant about the matter, still there can be no doubt but that, on the whole he felt a good deal flattered, and less than ever inclined to take up his abode in genteel lodgings at Ramsgate in company with Mrs. Perkins and her progeny.

Still, he was sorry for the woman's disappointment, and told her so; to which she replied that "sorrow was poor sauce," a statement Lawrence felt himself in no position to contradict, altough he took an early opportunity of opening his mind to Mr. Sondes on the subject of the Ramsgate trip.

"She is a vulgar wretch," replied that gentleman; "but still, I suppose she requires a little change and variety as much as any lady in the land. I will speak to Perkins about it;" and he did, with such good effect, that, before a week had passed, Miss Ada was digging graves for herself on the shore at Ramsgate, and jumping in and out of them with much of what she doubtless considered lightness and agility, while Mrs. Perkins alternately quarrelled with her landlady and ate shrimps in quantity. As for the younger children, the visit proved one of torment to them, for they were bathed, were dipped, shrieking and kicking in the sea, and borne, red in the face, and bordering on convulsions, back to the machine, where their mamma stood triumphantly waiting to receive them in an elegant undress of wet blue serge.

Whilst his family were thus enjoying themselves, Mr. Perkins "stuck to business," and Lawrence went

down to spend the remainder of the summer in that house at Grays which Mr. Sondes had taken for the sake of Olivine.

CHAPTER XV.

At Grays.

For the benefit of those readers who have patiently followed the course of this unromantic story up to the present point, it may be well to explain where Grays is, seeing that the place wherein Mr. Sondes abode, during all the bright summer months mentioned in previous chapters, happens to this day, to be one little frequented by Londoners.

It is not difficult of access. It is within an hour of the city; the air is pure and bracing, the country around is open and pleasant; it lies down by the river, and from the low rising ground beside the town you can see the Thames beneath, flowing on golden and shining in the sun. Nearly opposite, though a little more to the east, lies Gravesend; nearly opposite, — this time, however, a little to the west, — is Greenhithe, and on the same side of the river as "Grays Thurrock" itself, and south-by-east of the town, we find Tilbury, where the four pro-consular ways made by the Romans crossed each other.

Grays, the attentive reader will conclude from all this, is on the north bank of the Thames, and boasts a station on the Tilbury line. Even to the present day Grays Thurrocks is a very small place, consisting, in fact, but of one street, the houses in which are built principally of wood. For its size, however, it contains

more hotels, or, to speak with greater correctness, hostelries, than any other town in England. Further, there are a larger number of outfitters' shops than a chance visitor might suppose could hope to find customers, every ordinary necessary and luxury of life seeming to be subservient to the clothes and et-ceteras needful for a sea-voyage — to boxes, blankets, pea-jackets, ropes, flannel-vests, and such like.

There is a small church surrounded by a large burying-ground, the former of which had some additions made to it within the last twenty years, and is having some further additions made to it now. Even the oldest portion of the building is far from old, and can bear no comparison in point of interest and architectural beauty with the lonely church of West Thurrock, that lies away by itself in the fields, within sight of the river, and has not a dwelling-place near it, save the habitations of the dead.

Many vessels put into Grays, which fact accounts for the taverns and the outfitters; also, perhaps, for the wonderful little pies exhibited on deal boards in some of the windows, and a tarry smell about the lower portion of the town that greets the nose of the new-comer. Human ships also occasionally put into Grays — ships which may never cross the seas of life more — for the churchyard is, as I have said, large, and many a stranger lies buried there, who scarcely thought, when he was starting in existence, of the quiet port wherein he should eventually find shelter and rest.

Here, too, the gravestones bear frequently the merest record of a great tragedy.

"Unfortunately drowned" is the inscript
and indeed what need of more? What

ever seen the great depths, and listened to the howling of the winter wind, but can supply the rest? Mother earth has taken to her arms dead, those who left her living, and haps them up tenderly and lovingly with the soft green turf, while they sleep the sleep that may know no waking till Eternity.

It must be a wild bleak place in the winter time, this Grays Thurrock, when the storms beat the staggering vessels in here for shelter, and the wild wind speeds flying over the green hillocks and the flat lands down by the shore.

It must be fearfully exposed, and cold, and dreary, and desolate then; but in the summer season it is a sweet spot; pleasant and open, as before stated, and with a cool refreshing breeze generally blowing off the water, or across the lonely country that lies around. It is a nice place even now, in the summer time, for children who love the green fields; — but it was a nicer place still in the days when Lawrence Barbour knew it, for the bricks were not then moulded which have since built the few rows of cockney houses that spoil the neighbourhood; the chalk pits were still lying unquarried, and labourers' cottages, such as are now erected in Argent Street and on the hill-side, beyond the house where Mr. Sondes dwelt — were not needed.

There was no spick-and-span new brewery: there were no wharves; the staring two-storey houses, with their front gardens fenced round with walls built of crags, now cover ground where, in the days of which I am writing, the grass grew and the corn waved.

Well, people must live, and people must be housed; and there are plenty of green fields still left, thank God — enough, at any rate, to gladden your eyes and

mine, reader, even at Grays, where we can look east and west and south, and behold mile after mile of lonely country with scarcely a house, while the river runs on beside the fields that lie close down to its brink; and away on the other side are the Kentish hills, and there is a great hush in the air, a silence that a Londoner, accustomed to the noise and rattle of the busy streets, feels, and marvels at.

To this place came Lawrence Barbour to recruit his health. As a horse who has met with some grievous accident in the first fifty yards is sent back to paddock, there to be nursed and seen to, so Lawrence, stricken down almost before his race for wealth had begun, travelled to Grays, hoping that the fresh air and the thorough rest and the unutterable repose of that quiet retreat would, as Mr. Perkins phrased it, make a man of him again.

Over the roofs of the houses, on a level with which the train sped along, he looked with a vague wondering interest, marvelling what history each dwelling contained; past the cemetery — then not so full of graves as it is now — he was swept; within sight of many a manufactory, of endless chemical works, of countless factories, the engine laboured away; but at last came the open country — the blessed country, and Lawrence, lying back in his carriage, could have cried for very joy at being free again — for very sorrow, because he might never look on the face of nature more, feeling just the same as formerly — as strong, as sound, as healthy as of yore.

Fields, and still more fields; miles without a house; a country as flat as an Irish bog but r
because the marshes are green, and li

posed to the sun, which shines cheerily across them. Here and there a homestead, with its few trees, with its great stacks of hay, with its cattle grazing or lying still in the splendour of the summer afternoon; past Barking, leaving Dagenham, where, far to the right, it is said stood the house wherein the egg of the Gunpowder Plot was laid by the conspirators; on through Rainham, and so to Purfleet, which would be one of the loveliest spots round London for a pic-nic, were it not for the proximity of the Government magazines; then more fields — miles, and miles, and miles of them — and the line and the river approach closer to each other, and Lawrence, straining his eyes, could see over the flat lands, the Thames, like a silver thread, winding away among the grass, while the hills on the south side came nearer and nearer every moment.

At this point the country on the right-hand side of the down-line is so flat that all idea of distance and size is lost. It is only by the gleaming of the river, wide though it be, that the traveller can tell there is water between him and the rising grounds in Kent; thousand of acres of marsh-land, without tree or house, or hedge or ditch; great tracts of country over which the Thames has played, from time to time, strange tricks; then the church of West Thurrocks, standing in a position so lonely, that Lawrence began to marvel whether any congregation were ever collected within its walls, or if the dead rose from their graves, and trooped, a weird and ghastly procession, in their shrouds through the door and into the building at sound of the Sabbath bells; after that, coming nearer and nearer to the river, Grays, with its small station, with its few passengers, either alighting or proceeding — Grays,

where Mr. Sondes met him, and conveyed him in a phaeton to the house he had taken for the season.

It was a charming abode, standing on the top of a hill, from whence you could see down over the town of Grays, and all the open country stretching away to the south-east; while the Thames lay below — so still, so tranquil, under the summer's sun, that it looked less like a river than like a lake.

The house is still there, but changed. Where were hedgerows are houses; where was a garden is a brick-field; but there is a private road still up to the close gates, that seem the fashion in that part of the country; and beyond the road a pleasant footpath leads across the fields, just as it used to do.

By the hall-door stood Olivine ready to welcome the visitor. There was something pleasant and home-like in the figure of the child; something that struck back to Lawrence's heart bitterly in the day of his blackest repentance.

Unconsciously the mind receives all kinds of impressions without the slightest act of volition on the part of the spectator; every variety of picture is stamped on our brains, and we never know till the light falls hither and thither what scenes we have gathered up and stored in our memories, for good or for evil, for joy or for sorrow.

It was thus with Lawrence Barbour: there stood the child, with her dog at her side, with her kitten, now grown into a great cat, in her arms, looking up in his face with those sweet lovely eyes, into which there came tears as she gazed; there was Olivine, to whom he had sung his songs in the old house at Stepney, waiting to greet him with the sunli-

on her, with the flowers around her. Very gently she put the cat down and came forward shyly, and quietly as ever; but she clung to his hand and stroked it softly, and when he stooped to kiss her, she put her arm round his neck and began to cry.

The scene was stamped at the instant on his memory, and yet, as the days went by, the picture was thrust aside into the lumber-room of memory, and forgotten.

Time passed on and the years went by; but when the years had come and gone — come and gone, behold! he saw before him, clear and fresh as though that moment painted, the house and the child, the cat and the terrier. Once more he felt the soft hand stroking his — once again he kissed the pure young lips, and knew that she was crying because he looked so changed; and then — and then — he wished — oh! God, *how* he wished he could go back and live the years over for the second time, and, seeing light, leave the darkness behind him for ever.

There was no noise about Olivine's welcome; the child seemed to live in a sort of perpetual hush. Her tears were not as the tears of other girls of her age, and her joy was less like their joy even than her grief.

When Lawrence returned to Distaff Yard, Miss Ada greeted his arrival with dancing, clapping, pirouetting, and jumping, to an unlimited extent.

If he had been some kind of rare fruit which she was trying to bring down, her leaps could not have been higher or more persistent.

"Look at him! look at him!" she cried, till, it affords me pleasure to record, her father boxed her

ears, and told her not to make such an "infernal fool of herself."

She climbed on a table and embraced him; she told her younger brother, "their cousin had not died yet;" she displayed more of her legs than even Lawrence had ever seen before; and she looked uglier than of old.

"I came to see you in the hospital," she said, a day or two after his return, climbing on the back of his chair, and imparting this piece of information to his very ear.

Whereupon Lawrence suddenly rose, and the interesting child was suddenly capsized, giving vent, as she went down, to such a shriek as brought Mrs. Perkins from the kitchen to inquire what was the matter.

"He went and done it on purpose," sobbed Miss Ada, snivelling the while as only a child with a snub nose can. "He got up and let the chair down upon me, and he is a brute, and I hate him."

Whereupon Lawrence felt it necessary to offer some explanation. "How was I to know she was standing on the rail of the chair?" he asked. "If she is hurt, I am sorry; but I could not help it. Never mind, Ada, the first time I go out I will buy you some sweetmeats." Pacified by which promise, Ada professed her sorrow for calling him a brute, and stated that she only said so because she had hurt her head.

Now with Olivine there was nothing of all this; she had no affectation, she had no schemes, she did not want to attract notice. With her little heart brimming full of affection she could have sat apart for hours, asking neither for word, nor look, nor sign; [illegible] gather flowers, and lay them softly beside

without ever drawing his attention either to them or herself; she could carry out the sofa-pillows for him to rest his head on when he lay stretched on the grass, and never say, "I thought you would like them;" she could bring him the books he wanted and never ask for a story out of them; she could carry his jelly and grapes and take no surreptitious mouthful, as was the manner of Miss Ada.

Once she prayed him to sing — that was the only thing she ever begged him to do for her; and the cry of bitterness which broke from her lips when he said, "Ah! Olivine, I am afraid my singing-days are over," was a thing to be remembered. "I do not think I shall ever be able to sing again," he went on, laying his hand on her head as she sat on the grass beside him; "you must learn to sing for me, will you, pet?"

"I will try," she answered sadly; "but then I am not clever, like you; uncle says you are clever, and I am not."

"You are clever," he said; "clever as a woman ever wants to be, and you must learn to sing for me, and I will lie and listen, so;" and he stretched himself out full length on the turf, while Olivine laughed and covered him with daisies, and told him he was very naughty and told fibs to frighten her.

"It is no fib, child," he replied. "I lost my voice for love of Miss Alwyn one day, in Hyde Park."

"Now I know you are telling stories," she said; "because you don't love Miss Alwyn, not an atom."

"What makes you think that, little one?" he asked.

"I don't think it — I know it. I heard you talking to uncle about her, and you said you hated her;

and I thought then how wicked you were to hate anybody."

"What a saint it is!" remarked Lawrence. "Did you never hate anybody, Olivine? Now, honour bright, did you not?"

Olivine paused; she cast round and about her short life, routed out the inhabitants of this dark corner and of that, before she answered, "No, I never did, though I once very nearly hated Ada Perkins."

"What dreadful sin had she committed?" asked Lawrence, lazily.

"Well, you see," replied Olivine, confidentially, and looking round to discover if any one were listening; "she came to spend one afternoon with me —"

"I hear, Olivine, but I do not see," interrupted Lawrence, who loved to torment the child.

"She came, at any rate," went on Olivine, with a little pout, "and we were playing with the cat that begs, you know, beside the open window, and Ada took her up; but pussy would not stay with her, and always walked over from Ada to me. As fast as she came to me I gave her back to Ada, and as fast as I gave her to Ada pussy came to me, till at last Ada got cross, and said, 'You nasty ungrateful beast, you shall not stay with either of us,' and pitched her out from ever so high into the garden."

"And what did you do, then?" inquired Mr. Lawrence Barbour.

"Oh, I felt I don't know how! Nurse Mary says I tried to jump out of the window after pussy, but I don't remember that. I cannot remember anything except Ada crying and saying she did not mean it; and then Nurse Mary brought me pussy,

sound, and after that she put me to bed, and when I awoke pussy was asleep beside me. But I am afraid I struck Ada," continued the child. "I am not certain, and nobody would ever tell me; but I think I struck her, and I never struck anybody before; and if I did strike her, I could not help it."

"Come and give me a kiss, Olivine," said Lawrence, who enacted the grand seigneur in those days, and had every person at his beck and call. "I am sure you are a good child, and — shall I tell you a secret? — I hate Ada Perkins myself!"

"But you must not — it is wicked, it is bad; you cannot go to Heaven if you hate."

"I shall have to take my chance of that," answered Lawrence, calmly; "this world is enough for me."

He should not have uttered such a sentence in the child's hearing, and next instant he knew he had been wrong; for Olivine put her little hand upon his mouth and "hushed" him, as though they had been standing in a church.

"Do not say that," she pleaded, "it is naughty, and you must not be naughty; please be good, please — please," and Olivine flung herself beside him, and threw such a tone of earnest entreaty into her voice, that Lawrence, struck with a sudden wonderment, answered, —

"It would be easy for any one to be good who was always near you, Olivine. I think you must be a child-angel, you are so perfect."

And he drew down the sweet face and kissed it once, — twice, — thrice, little deeming, as he did

so, he was kissing in very truth the good angel of his life.

It was very happy, it was very innocent, it was very pleasant, but all at once Olivine started up, crying, —

"Oh! Mr. Barbour, there are some strangers coming in! I must go to Nurse Mary, and see who they are."

"Nurse Mary, however, saved Olivine the trouble, for she came forward into the garden at the moment, announcing, —

"Mr. and Miss Alwyn are in the drawing-room, to see Mr. Barbour."

CHAPTER XVI.

Taken Unawares.

With anything rather than a good grace Lawrence rose to his feet and prepared to obey Nurse Mary's summons. Inwardly, he anathematised Mr. Alwyn, and Miss Alwyn, and all visitors. In his heart of hearts he wished father and daughter far enough; but still he rose and walked into the house, and entered the drawing-room, where Mr. Alwyn greeted him with a sort of nervous cordiality.

"Taken you by storm, eh? Went first to Distaff Yard, but found the bird flown; next best thing that presented itself was to take the train at Stepney and come on here. Mr. Lawrence Barbour — my daughter. Etta, you ought to know this gentleman without my introduction."

At which plain hint Etta advanced and shook

hands, putting on her most seductive smile, and saying in her softest voice, —

"I really do not know how to thank you, Mr. Barbour. I cannot tell you how grieved I am to think my safety should have been purchased at so terrible a price. *Are* you better? I *trust* you are." And Lawrence felt the hand she still suffered to lie in his, tremble, as Miss Alwyn asked this question.

Then, for the first time in his life, he experienced a strange and unwonted sensation.

He had looked at this girl often, previously, at a distance — he had mocked her riding — he had sneered at her hair — he had stared at her in church — he had mimicked and derided the siren whom he could not now find words to answer — before whom he now stood for a moment confounded and abashed.

"You look so pale," she went on; "and I am *so* sorry. If I had been the one injured instead of you, how much better it would have been; for you, papa tells me, are going to be a great worker, while I am but a cumberer of the ground."

"Nay, nay, Etta," interrupted Mr. Alwyn, who felt that perhaps this was going a little too far; while Lawrence answered, a little bitterly, —

"The humble creatures of this earth, Miss Alwyn, are for use, and the beautiful are for ornament. Men crush the useful, and admire the beautiful; and I am happy to have fulfilled the universal law and saved you from injury."

"What a cynic!" she remarked.

"No, I only speak the truth," he replied, and he raised his eyes and fixed them boldly on her. "I am happy to have been of use to you, though I did not

feel there was any happiness in the matter five minutes since."

"Am I to accept that speech as a compliment?" she asked, trifling with the fastening of her glove, as she spoke.

"Not as a compliment," Lawrence answered, at which reply Mr. Alwyn laughed, and said, —

"Upon my honour, young gentleman, it is a pity you were not born a courtier; for your speeches are fitter for a palace than for the homes of ordinary mortals. If Etta were not accustomed to flattery, I should beg you to remember she is but a merchant's daughter, and not a maiden of romance. As it is, however, I suppose she knows pretty well the value of such commodities, and prizes them accordingly."

Once more the blood rushed hot and swift through Lawrence's veins, and he would have stood up to do battle for the genuineness of his sentiments, but that Miss Alwyn interrupted him.

"On the contrary, papa," she remarked, "I prize Mr. Barbour's words exceedingly, feeling confident he really means what he says, which is more than I should venture to affirm concerning most of my acquaintances." And with that Miss Alwyn smiled once again sweetly on Lawrence, who felt inclined at the moment to turn and flee away.

"As a rule," a clever woman once informed me, "we dislike people whom we do not know;" as a rule, likewise, I think, we instinctively recoil from those who are destined to work us evil. It is Nature's warning: it is her hand laid on us in appeal, it is her voice bidding us beware; and if we disregard the warning, the appeal, and the caution, what then? Why, then

we are but as the moths who, put out at one window return through another, and are burnt in the flame before a hand can be stretched forth to save them!

Up to that time Lawrence had hearkened to the voice of his better angel, and remained resolutely deaf to all the seductive charms of Mr. Alwyn's discourse. Not that gentleman's polite and delicate attentions, not the hot-house flowers, not the rare fruits, not the pressing invitations to stay at Mallingford, not the entreaties that he would consider Hereford Street his home, had moved him from his fixed purpose of keeping the Alwyns at arm's length; but now a woman's voice and a woman's smile made him an unwilling captive. He could not turn and flee away. He could do nothing but remain and listen to the songs of the mermaid, whose tones rang out their sweetest and fullest for his benefit.

"I wish we could have persuaded you to come and stay with us;" — this was the burden of the melody — "papa would have taken a house at Brighton, Folkestone, Torquay — anywhere, if you had only consented to join us. We were so grievously disappointed, and, I may say for myself, so hurt —"

"Hurt, Miss Alwyn?" echoed Lawrence.

"Yes, hurt," she repeated; "no one could have grieved more than I did about the consequences my accident entailed upon you. But it was not my fault, now, was it, Mr. Barbour? — and ought you to have borne malice towards me, — ought you?"

"Malice," he said, stupefied.

"I do not blame you," she went on. "I cannot tell how I myself might have felt had any such calamity befallen me; but I want us to be friends, now. I want

you to believe that we regret your accident more than it is possible for you to do, and — and — I have come with papa to-day to tell you this, and to say that I, like you, have been angry — angry at your refusal to come to us; but that I am now only sorry. What a wretched thing it is never to be able to express one's meaning perfectly," finished Miss Alwyn, with engaging abruptness, leaving the disentanglement of her sentence for Lawrence.

Fill up that sentence, reader, with a by-play which was beyond all writing; with a look — with a smile — with a blush — with a drooping of the eyes — with a movement of the hands — with a peeping in and out of a dainty foot — with a tone, now of reproach, now of pathos, now of pleading; and you have the position. You have the woman who attracted Lawrence and lured him on — on, spite of his former antipathy, of his instinctive aversion.

He was but a lad. For all his wise thoughts and firm resolves, for all his manly resolution and keen perception, he was but a lad — but a reed in the hands of such as she, but as wax capable of receiving any impression she chose to stamp upon him.

Everything was in her favour — manner, appearance, dress. Shall we say dress is nothing? Shall we babble about Nature unadorned? Shall we say a pretty woman is equally pretty in any attire? Bah! There are times and places when dress is everything; when Venus herself, if she appeared with no article of attire save a piece of drapery artistically arranged, would never be asked to dance, but rather be taken forthwith in charge, and escorted to the nearest station-house. Given, a man w
much of female society, and see which

down and worships — the pure and simple, or the gorgeous and sensuous; barefooted virtue, or vice resplendent with diamonds; the lily which has toiled not, nor spun, but trusts to its own native loveliness, or the Queen of the East, clad in all manner of rich garments, and followed by a train of slaves and servants.

Which? Ah, friends, many a weary mile humanity travels before it learns to choose the light of the home taper to that of the will-o'-the-wisp; many a heart has broken running after the end of the rainbow; many a soul has gone far astray because of the lust of the eye, which takes pleasure — and innocent enough pleasure, oftentimes, as it seems to us — in everything that the art and the skill of man have combined together to make beautiful and attractive.

This was the first moral stumbling-block that came to obstruct Lawrence Barbour's course in life. He was a slave to his senses. In his own person he disregarded luxury, he was willing and able to bear hardship and discomfort; but for all that, the fashions of this world influenced him. A handsomely furnished room, an elegantly dressed woman, a splendidly appointed equipage, an array of servants, a blaze of light, and glitter of glass, and shining of plate, produced an effect upon him all through his life which can scarcely be understood by those who have always viewed such accessories as mere matters of course — as the inevitable landscape in the background of a portrait, as the photographer's stock pillar or antique chair.

Lawrence had sense, but it was impotent against this involuntary passion. He was taken captive by his eyes, by the sweep of a dress, by the shape of a bonnet, by the arrangement of a room, by the tone of a voice.

He was a slave at last; she had him to have and to hold from that day forth till he hour arrived when, bleeding and maimed, he escaped from her toils, having learnt wisdom in the only school where each man eventually becomes his own philosopher, and preaches great truths to himself out of the lesson-books of his personal experience.

She had him — she netted him with the hair he was wont to laugh at, with the eyes which had in them neither a pure nor a holy light, with the hands which were so white and treacherous, with the smile that was so sweetly cruel, with the rich attire which became her so royally — she had him, this lad, who when he grew to be a man, and entered into possession of man's estate of responsibility and sorrow, cursed the day in which he met her, the mother that bore, and the father who begat her.

Sweetly she ran on with her pleasant unisons. Strictly speaking, the music she made might not be critically correct, but Lawrence never thought of analysing it.

He wanted to hate her, and still he could not. He tried to shake off the spell she laid upon him, and think of her as the Miss Alwyn whom he and his brother were wont to mock at as she came forth from the gates of Mallingford; but the attempt was useless — he did not want to admire her, but he could not help himself; he had detested her at a distance, and now, when she spoke and smiled, he loved her.

Loved her! What a poor and feeble expression to convey an idea of the passion which to[o]k that day of Lawrence Barbour, and be[c]ame more intense as the years went by, till it

worked its own destruction — till there was no more fuel left in his heart to feed the flame which had consumed his happiness.

Meanwhile, Mr. Alwyn walked from window to window, contributing his mite to the conversation, and graciously expressing his approval of the view.

"The Thames really looks exceedingly well from here," remarked the West-ender. "I had no idea there was anything so pretty on this side of London. Should not mind having a house in this neighbourhood at all; but then the want of wood is a drawback, and timber does take such a deuce of a time to grow."

Having delivered himself of which opinion, Mr. Alwyn took up another post of observation, and declared that the choice of such a residence did Mr. Sondes credit.

This sentiment reminding Miss Alwyn of the fact of Mr. Sondes' existence, she suggested the possibility to her father of their being intruders, and the consequent desirability of their immediate departure.

"Very well, my dear," acquiesced Mr. Alwyn; "just as you like. Now, Mr. Barbour, I depend on your paying us a visit; you must return a lady's call, remember; no getting off that; no escape possible, recollect; and no compromise accepted. Come to Hereford Street any day you like — only the earlier day the better, and take care of yourself, and — God bless you," which was rather a favourite form of speech of the colonial broker, and one which always raised a doubt in Percy Forbes' mind as to the god he meant, — "whether Mammon or not," finished that incorrigible scapegrace, when alluding to the matter at a subsequent period of this story.

"And good-bye," said Miss Alwyn, in her softest tone of voice; and then Lawrence opened the drawing-room door for them to pass out, and went down the stairs, and was about to accompany them to the outer gate; but just at that juncture Olivine came shyly forward, and beckoned him aside.

"Do not let them go, please," she said, pulling his sleeve piteously, and turning her back a little towards Miss Alwyn, who caused the child great anguish of mind by staring at her persistently. "I have asked Nurse Mary to get dinner for them and all, and uncle will soon be home; and he would not like them to leave. Please keep them, please do."

"Are you certain your uncle will not be angry?" he inquired.

"Certain — sure!" And Olivine's answer was so emphatic that Lawrence, without further hesitation, laid the state of the case before Mr. and Miss Alwyn, who, nothing loth, accepted the child's invitation, and turned back into the house, Mr. Alwyn saying, in his loftily-jocular manner, —

"Remember, little girl, if we get into trouble through this, you are to take the blame, and see us out of danger."

"Yes, sir," was Olivine's demure reply; and then, addressing Miss Alwyn, she asked, with the quiet self-possession of an experienced hostess, —

"Would you like to come with me and take off your bonnet?"

"Yes, I should, very much," answered Miss Alwyn, adding, in an undertone, to her father,

"Isn't it a perfect curiosity?"

When the bonnet had been taken off, and the

shawl also — when Miss Alwyn had smoothed her hair and arranged her personal appearance generally to her liking, she happened to turn suddenly round, and caught Olivine looking her over as only children and women know how.

There was something in that look which put Miss Alwyn out, and she inquired sharply, "Well, you funny little thing, are you admiring me?" to which plain question Olivine, equally disconcerted, perhaps, returned the plain answer, "No, I am not."

CHAPTER XVII.

Advice given but not Taken.

When Mr. Sondes returned from London, he was not a little surprised to find his house in possession of the enemy, for as such he virtually regarded Mr. Alwyn. Nevertheless, war not having been openly declared, there was no resource left for him save to welcome the newcomers to his house, and bid them consider themselves at home. He was glad Olivine had played her part in the drama so discreetly; not for worlds would he have failed in any act of courtesy or hospitality.

For father and daughter to have left without eating or drinking, or taking rest, would have mortified him intensely; and accordingly he laid his hand on his little girl's head and told her she had done well, which was the more gratifying to Olivine, as she had her own misgivings on the subject of Miss Alwyn.

But now her uncle approved of her performances, the child felt relieved and happy.

Deposed from her seat on her uncle's right hand,

she still, from her corner beside Lawrence, surveyed Miss Alwyn, and made that young lady somewhat uncomfortable by reason of her scrutiny.

When Lawrence came to know Henrietta better, the beauty confessed she had undergone much at Grays by reason of Olivine.

"The little wretch made me eat in spite of myself," she said. "I felt afraid to leave any pieces, feeling those eyes were upon me," at which confession Percy Forbes, who was present, laughed delightedly.

"The East-end child seems not to have appreciated West-end fashions," he remarked, and the remark caused Miss Alwyn to flush angrily, while Lawrence answered for her, that he thought West-end fashions might do a great deal for the East-end child.

"Oh! you do, do you?" said Percy Forbes; and he laughed again, for they were all very intimate and plain-spoken in those days which had still to come, when Olivine sat on Lawrence Barbour's right hand, and kept watch over Miss Alwyn, who felt "put out" by the child's close inspection.

There are some games in which bystanders see too much of the play; there are smiles and looks, and tones and gestures, which bear a different signification to a third party to what they do to one at least of the performers. The man who guesses the secret of thimble-rigging is *de trop* between deceiver and dupe; and there is many a conjuror of whom the law takes unhappily no cognisance gliding about drawing-rooms, and putting in an appearance at evening-parties, who hates the sight of a pair of unbelieving eyes, and the curl of a contemptuous lip, when going through her

paces for the benefit of some fresh victim — of some credulous simpleton.

Those were early days for Olivine to be *de trop*, and for Miss Alwyn to feel that she was so. The social comedy, as a rule, is one not easily understood by children, and Olivine did not understand the part Miss Alwyn acted in it for many a year — oh! no, not for many a year. She only felt intuitively the same instinctive aversion to her as a dog might have done; but the young lady felt this aversion, and writhed under it.

Her prettily rounded sentences were checked at sight of Olivine's inquiring eyes; the applause which her sharp witticisms usually elicited was not sought for on this occasion, because she knew Olivine would not see the point: she had to eat, as she said, and feign no fine ladyish airs; she had to finish her wine, and allow the glass to be replenished, and utter no entreaty of "Stop, pray stop" — because she feared Olivine would lift her dark eyes and fasten them upon her wonderingly.

"What a mistake it is to have such terrible children in to dinner!" sighed Miss Alwyn, as the train dashed over the marsh lands back towards London.

"Yes. But then she is such a good little creature," answered Mr. Alwyn; "and pretty." For Mr. Alwyn was not blind, and could appreciate the making of a beautiful woman when he saw it.

"Oh dear! do you think so?" said his daughter. "She is so plain and peculiar."

"Peculiar, but not plain, Etta," replied Mr. Alwyn. "She is anything but plain; and you will allow me to be a judge on that subject, at least, I hope."

After which the judge fell asleep, and Etta continued her musings in the twilight.

Of course there is no such thing as prospective jealousy in the world; the scientific man feels no soreness when the possibility is suggested to him of that young Ozone rubbing his memory out of men's minds as the years go by; the doctor who has prescribed for all manner of ailments for forty years, invariably lays down his pen and puts his spectacles in their case, and benignly blesses the mere lad who comes to push him from his stool. It is human nature, is it not, to do so? to smile on the man or woman who is to fill up your place in the world when you have grown old, and weary, and obsolete; it is human nature to like those who are to come after you, whose feet will travel the road to success when your limbs are tottering and feeble, whose ears will listen to the throbbings of other men's hearts, when yours are deaf and treacherous; who will write books, and perform wonderful operations, and build stupendous bridges, and conquer natural difficulties, and solve still unsolved enigmas, and be sought by the learned, and titled, and wealthy, and be famous and renowned when your name, friend, when your name, high as it stands now, shall be but as a word that has been spoken, as a song that has been sung.

Is this human nature? Ah! reader, is not this rather artificial nature — conventional nature — the nature men put on when they summon up all their courage, and swear to themselves that they will not tremble when the fatal Monday comes; but go forth to meet the inevitable, calmly and decently?

Do people like being hung? do they like Jack

Ketch when they shake hands with Calcraft, or any other of his representatives? are they perfectly resigned, think you, when they murmur their last prayer in time before being launched into eternity? No. Well, there is a time of youth, and popularity, and sunshine, for most of God's creatures, and after that the eternity of temporal nonentity, and age, and winter gloom.

But the children and the lovers, and the beginners and the strugglers, are bathed in the sunshine still, and the most that those whose day has gone by can do, is to sit down resignedly by the quiet hearth and thank God for the glory which once lighted up their path, though the glory and the brightness have departed.

And the application of all this? you ask. The application is, that although Miss Alwyn's feelings towards Olivine Sondes were not amiable, still they were natural. The one success in life which a beautiful woman can achieve she saw prospectively achieved after she was *passé* by another. Prospectively she was jealous — the present beauty of the future belle — of the loveliness which was coming — of the grace that was to charm.

Instinctively, as Olivine disliked her, so she disliked Olivine — disliked her from the moment the child answered her question, as to whether she were admiring her, with the words, "No, I am not."

That was the glove thrown down — that was the challenge to battle, and nothing Olivine essayed could take the sting out of that sentence.

All in vain she tried to amuse Miss Alwyn after dinner; brought her books, exhibited her pets, took her round the garden, gathered her a bouquet, and did

her childish best to make the rich man's daughter comfortable.

All in vain. Miss Alwyn closed the books, buried her nose in the flowers, and then said their perfume was overpowering; the terrier would not make friends, and she merely smiled listlessly at the begging cat; while she teased the parrot till he bit her; whereupon the young lady screamed aloud, and declared that so dangerous an animal ought not to be kept.

"Why did you not tell me he would bite, you stupid child?" exclaimed Miss Alwyn, red with anger and pain.

"I did not know, ma'am; I did not — I did not, indeed!" Olivine pleaded. "He never bit me."

"Of course not. What is there about you to make him do anything of the kind? You never excite him nor tease him. Horrid wretch! I wonder somebody does not twist his neck. I am sure I should if I were in the house."

"I don't think you would," said Olivine, quietly.

"Don't you, indeed, Miss Wisdom? What should prevent me?"

"I would," answered the child, and her breath came quick and short as she spoke the words. "You should not touch my parrot — no, not unless you killed me first."

Whereupon Miss Alwyn burst out laughing.

"What a little tragedy queen it is," she said; "how its cheeks flame and its hands clench, and its eyes sparkle at the idea of the combat. Come to me, Olivine," she finished; "I was only in fun; I would not touch your parrot, child. Now, tell me all about yourself, and how you contrive to spend the days."

Very doubtfully Olivine accepted this apology; with still greater doubt she replied to all demands on her confidence; but yet, having nothing to conceal, she told how she amused herself and Lawrence; how he used to sing to her and tell her stories, and how sometimes he told her stories still.

There was not a detail of their daily life but was extracted from Olivine in due course by the lady whom she did not admire, and who left the flowers the child had so carefully gathered for her behind on the table; while she carried away, with a smile and a coquettish affectation, a few buds Lawrence selected and arranged with trembling hands, and presented to her with a certain boyish grace as a souvenir of her visit to Grays.

"As though I were likely to forget it?" she said, from her seat in the railway-carriage; and then their fingers somehow locked together in another good-bye; and though the light was fading, Lawrence could see that she blushed violently.

Another moment, and the guard banged-to the door, the whistle sounded, and the visitors were off.

Home through the twilight walked the youth, feeling dizzy as if he had drunk too much wine, and yet seeming to tread on air; home to think of her, to dream of her, to feel all his old acquaintances and pursuits insupportable, to ask himself what it all meant, what glamour she had cast over him.

When he reached Mr. Sondes' house, Olivine and her uncle were seated together in the drawing-room looking out upon the Thames and the surrounding country that lay bathed in the light of a young moon.

"You saw them off, Lawrence?" Mr. Sondes said, terrogatively.

"Yes, sir," was the reply; "and I promised Mr. Alwyn I would dine with them on Friday next, even if you could not get off your engagement."

"Quite right, my boy. It is you they want, not me," answered Mr. Sondes. "On the whole, that adventure of yours is not going to turn out such a misfortune as I once thought it would."

"I do not know what you mean," Lawrence said; and immediately Mr. Sondes laughed, and answered,—

"Ah well! you will know what I mean some day, without any further explanation," and he laughed again; but Lawrence did not feel pleased for all that, and sat down and looked out at the moonlight, marvelling.

"I think you are wrong about Mr. Alwyn," he ventured, after a pause. "He said to me, over and over again, that he did wish you to come very much. He is most anxious to know more of you."

"Think of that!" exclaimed Mr. Sondes, meditatively; "and I have done business with him these twenty years, without ever having an idea of anything of the kind."

"And we lived beside him for nearly four years," returned Lawrence, "and were never asked inside his door. But I am not going to bear malice on that account," went on the youth magnanimously; "a man has a right to choose his acquaintances for himself at any time of his life."

"Certainly," acquiesced Mr. Sondes; "and a man has a right to decline making acquaintances at any time of his life" — which, being an incontrovertible truth, Lawrence abstained from any reply likely to force its application to t[illegible]t.

"It is decidedly a good thing for you," said Mr. Sondes, after a pause. "Mr. Alwyn can push you on in the world if he likes. He can give you a good berth and a good salary to-morrow, and initiate you into the mysteries of his business the day after. If you continue to visit at Hereford Street you will mix much in society and see a good deal of the world. You will form acquaintances such as you could never hope to meet with in Stepney; and altogether it will be your own fault, I should say, if you do not make your fortune somehow or other out of the affair."

"Make my fortune with a constitution not worth that!" and Lawrence, as he spoke, held out his hand full of leaves he had been nervously pulling off one of the flowers out of poor Olivine's rejected bouquet—"not worth that!"

"Tut, man!" retorted Mr. Sondes. "What a fuss you are in about your ribs! If every bone in your body were broken, you could not make yourself out a greater cripple. You will be strong enough some day; and, meantime, it is a great matter you have found a backer like Mr. Alwyn, able and willing to give you a lift."

There was silence for a few minutes, then Lawrence spoke,—

"Mr. Sondes," he began, "I wish you would not misunderstand me in this business. I wish you would believe I am in earnest when I say that no offer Mr. Alwyn could make would induce me to leave you and Mr. Perkins, so long as you are both willing to keep me. There is no unselfishness in this," he continued hurriedly, seeing Mr. Sondes was about to reply. "None; I could not bear to owe anything to Mr.

Alwyn, either to his kindness, his generosity, or his justice; and if you think in accepting his invitation and going to his house I lay myself under an obligation of any kind, I will not go. I place myself in your hands: I will go, or I will stay, according as you answer," and Lawrence leaned forward across the window, and sat with the bright moonlight streaming full upon him, waiting for Mr. Sondes' reply.

But Mr. Sondes did not reply. He turned towards Olivine and said, —

"It is high time you were in bed, little one. You ought to have been asleep an hour ago. Run away now, my pet. Good night, Olivine, good night." He put the hair back from her brow and kissed her, then he took her head between his two hands and turned it towards the window, and looked at the child with such an expression of love in his face as Lawrence had never seen upon any face before.

Afterwards he kissed her once again, and bade her depart. But before she obeyed, she went up to Lawrence, who, according to his custom, kissed her also whilst he bade her good night.

Up to that time, Mr. Sondes had taken no notice of this polite attention on Lawrence's part, or, if he did, had passed it over as something not worth thinking about; but on the occasion in question a troubled look came into his eyes, and an idea into his mind that he was not the very first person who had unconsciously built castles only to see them levelled with the ground.

Even while Olivine was closing the door behind her, he had made up his mind as to his future course; and then he threw himself back in his chair, and

gazing out at the Thames and the lowlands lying down by the shore, and the Kentish hills across the river, rather than at Lawrence, answered the young man's question thus, —

"If I had a son of my own come to your time of life, I should reply to him just as I am going to reply to you now. Take all I am about to say for what you think it is worth. My opinion is, that in going to Hereford Street you place yourself under no obligation, but you put yourself in danger."

"In danger," repeated Lawrence; "I do not exactly —"

"I was about to explain," interrupted Mr. Sondes. "Miss Alwyn is a very handsome young lady; probably you never knew how handsome till to-day, and you may have happened to gather out of the course of your reading, Lawrence, that men will be men, and fall in love with pretty women, let the after-cost of that pleasure prove what it may. Now suppose you fall in love with Miss Alwyn."

Here Mr. Sondes paused; but Lawrence made no observation. He seemed to have gone inside himself for the time being, and sat there with his hands clasped tightly together, silent and listening.

"Suppose you fall in love with Miss Alwyn," continued Mr. Sondes, "you will surely be preparing a great disappointment for yourself; she is certain to marry wealth. That is a game in which I fear all the moves would be against you; for she will lead you on, step by step; she is just the woman to do it for her own vanity's sake; and then, when she has got your heart, she will cast it away. I am told that was what she did with Mr. Forbes."

"Percy Forbes!" exclaimed Lawrence. "The man never had a heart either to give or be cast away."

"Perhaps so, perhaps not," was the cool reply; "in any case, I have said my say. Now decide for yourself, go or remain away; accept or decline; only remember my words, the girl is not a straightforward honest girl, and she will not develop into an honest, straightforward woman. She has too much manner, she is full of compliment and address, she would like to have everybody at her feet, ay, even an old fellow like myself; she is not the sort of daughter-in-law I should care to welcome home had I a son. But there, I have done. Do not answer me; do not think me prejudiced and unkind, only think over my words. And God bless you, lad, and God keep you, for you have the voyage still to make, and cannot know where the quicksands lie on which so many a gallant ship has foundered."

With that Mr. Sondes arose, and held out his hand to Lawrence, who took it gratefully.

For an instant he hesitated whether he should not follow Mr. Sondes' implied advice, and keep away from Hereford Street. Pride, consistency, caution, all bade him turn a deaf ear to the blandishments of the parvenu's daughter.

Should he visit at the house he had vowed never to enter; should he be indebted to Mr. Alwyn for so much as a single dinner; should he throw himself in the way of incurring expenses he could ill afford; of acquiring tastes he had no means of gratifying? He would flee the temptation. He decided he would, and he opened his lips to say so; but then a vision of Miss Alwyn, as he had seen her that day, in her per-

ferring rather the meagre hospitality of the Clay Farm, and the somewhat solitary state of Lallard House, to a week's sojourn in his old home.

In his outward man he was much improved by his residence in the great city. Without any of the personal advantages nature had lavished so freely on Percy Forbes, he was yet sufficiently good-looking and gentlemanlike to pass muster in any society. There was something in his appearance also which attracted attention, something in the peculiar expression of his eyes, in the firm, hard set of his face, which was old beyond his years; in the decision of his manner; in the courage, not to say occasional brusqueness of his replies.

The world has a respect, as a rule, for those who are not afraid to contradict its maxims. It is apt to attribute to cleverness expressions which oftentimes spring merely from a positive and self-reliant temper. Women especially took kindly to the young man, and tried hard to lure him from the allegiances of his existence; but in vain. To business and the East End he devoted his working-hours; to Hereford Street and Henrietta Alwyn he gave up every leisure moment.

Not but that he fought against himself and her; not that she ever had him in such subjection as her other admirers. He would stand in his own room after he returned from one of the Hereford Street parties, and swear by everything holy and by everything evil that Henrietta Alwyn's reign over him should have an end, that he would go no more to her father's, that the acquaintance should cease; and once, I think, he might have held fast to his purpose, had not Percy

Forbes said to him as they walked together down Brook Street the following night: —

"Look here, Barbour. I know you do not like me, and I know you do not trust me, but I want to say something to you for all that. Don't get too fond of Miss Alwyn; she will only fool you as she has fooled others; and even if she were willing to marry you, no worse luck could happen. I have been through the fire there, and know all about her from bitter experience."

"And it is manly for you to speak about Miss Alwyn as you are doing, I suppose," was the reply.

"It is friendly, at all events," answered Percy coolly, as they parted, the one to make his way into Piccadilly, and the other to walk back slowly and thoughtfully on his way to Limehouse.

He would not give her up, he would believe no falsehoods about her, he would work, he would learn, he would make a name, and a fortune, and a position, and lay all at her feet, only praying her to take him along with them.

He felt sure, he felt as positive as he was living that Miss Alwyn loved him; she might have fooled others, she might have flirted with others, she might have rejected others, but she should not refuse him, she should not.

And then he cursed his destiny which prevented his asking her to marry him at once. Poor as he still was, he could not run the risk of being thought mercenary; and so he hung back, growing shyer and shyer as the weeks and the months went by, while she became kinder and more gracious every day, making more evident advances as he receded, and filling his

life full of sunshine, gilding his work with a glory of love and hope, and causing the hours to flit by on the wings of joy and happiness.

He was too sure of her; he never needed the voice which whispered caution in his ear. In spite of all advice, notwithstanding his own misgivings, forgetful of his former prejudices, he had set himself on a course in which he was determined to continue spite of wind or weather. As Jacob served Laban for Rachel, so Lawrence Barbour served mammon for Henrietta Alwyn, for the girl whom in his inmost heart he despised himself for loving, whom he knew to be ill-tempered, hypocritical, unfeeling, cruel; but at the same time beautiful and fascinating exceedingly. Her beauty was the bait that allured him; he had still to learn fully the strength and sharpness of the hook which that bait concealed.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Little Gossip.

There is probably no place on earth where so much work is got through as in London; where so much thought, so much "doing," so much feeling, so much hearing, so much seeing, is compressed into the days as in this, the great city of labour.

Here, men live out their threescore years and ten before they reach middle age. Event succeeds to event; duty to duty; employment to employment, without pause or break: over the stones, and along the pavement, the tide of existence rolls without cessation; through men's brains there is a great thoroughfare worn

by the traffic of work — work always beginning, never ending; in their ears is a continual noise, caused by the present wheels of something that has to be done to-day, and a dull roar, announcing the coming something which must be done to-morrow, and the morrow after, and through every succeeding morrow of their lives.

Here can be no folding together of the hands, till the hour comes for final rest. Here can be no slippered ease, no dreamy contemplation; every soldier of the great army is on duty, if he comes even within sight of the battle-field; work stands on the doorstep waiting to be attended to; work waits for audience in the innermost chamber; work takes its seat in brougham and barouche, and who shall say it nay; work lurks beside the sleeper, and wakes him through the night, lest even in dreams he should forget its sovereignty, forget this Pharaoh of the modern Egypt, who answers the appeal of his slaves, however weary or however worn they may be, with the taunting sentence, "Make brick, make brick; ye are idle, ye are idle."

Work! — every man's mind is full of it. See you, as you walk along the streets in the early morning, men hurrying city-ward, men going forth to their labours.

The pavements are crowded; the omnibuses are laden; there are carriages proceeding eastward; there are cabs following close after one another.

Whichever quarter you take, North, East, South, or West, it is the same — over London Bridge they come, seventeen conveyances a minute; down the City Road and Shoreditch, down Goswell and St. John Streets, pour the inhabitants of Holloway and Highbury,

of Islington, of Pentonville, of Hackney, of Bethnal Green, of Kingsland, Dalston, Cambridge Heath, Hoxton and Homerton, and Barnsbury and Ball's Pond; along the Commercial and Mile End Roads troop the dwellers in Stepney, Bow, Limehouse, Shadwell, Poplar, Whitechapel, and Wapping. Down Holborn and through the Strand sweeps the West End tide, bearing with it the denizens of Kensington and Bayswater, of Notting Hill, of St. John's Wood, of Paddington, Tyburnia, Belgravia, Pimlico, Chelsea, Hammersmith, and Fulham. As for the South — across the bridges it sends its tributaries to the great human stream. By train, by omnibus, on foot, they come to swell the flood: from Greenwich and Blackheath, from New Cross, Peckham, Lewisham, Camberwell, Sydenham, Norwood, Walworth, Brixton, Bermondsey, Deptford, Kennington, Lambeth, Clapham, Battersea, Vauxhall, and all outlying towns and villages they come to work; they are to be met with in the back streets as in the main thoroughfares; they are to be found taking short cuts on foot, — beheld in the regular roads seated on the tops of omnibuses, or hurrying from the various railway termini.

It matters little in which direction the reader turns his steps, whether he elect to make his observations in Aldgate or the Borough, in Stangate or the Horseferry Road, at the Canal Bridge in Clerkenwell, or any remoter locality, the result will be the same. Every house contributes its unit to the great congregation; from each dwelling some one goes "forth to his work and his labour till the evening."

And this work, this constant labour, stamps a certain character on the faces of the Londoners, which is to be observed on the faces of none of their country-

men. They seem to be always looking after something which is a long way in advance of them, thinking of something in which the busy streets and the passers-by have no part or share.

There is a most extraordinary look in the countenance of a Londoner, when he is "himself," when he does not know any one is observing him, when he is not talking or acting any social part. He appears like one who sees without observing, who hears without noticing, who thinks without analysing, who, living continually in the midst of his fellows, is still mentally alone, who is only vaguely conscious of the existence of that second life, which to philosophers seems the real life, and who is amazed, and grateful, and yet half-afraid when some one puts his thoughts into words for him, separates the floating mass of aspirations and regrets, and hopes and sorrows, and feelings which are common to us all, and presents each crystallised into its own proper form, clothed with its own especial beauty, whether that beauty be sad or bright, for his contemplation.

The very walk of these workers is different from the walk of the semi-workers elsewhere.

Take your stand, reader, any morning at the top of Cheapside, and you will understand what I mean.

The country people move along swiftly, or slowly, as the case may be; but in either case indefinitely. The Londoners, on the contrary, walk as men having a purpose, straight on to their object.

Distances in the great city may have some share in producing this result: when a man has but to lounge down the street, or round the corner — when he has

but to stretch out his hand and lay it on the shoulder of John, Tom, and Harry — when he can take his time over his meals — when there is no hurry about anything, naturally, his walk becomes desultory and leisurely, like his business. The men and the women around him take the world, its labours, its pleasures, its sorrows quietly. The pace of life is not the same over the fields as over the stones. Every person in the remote regions where the country people come from, has less to do in existence than it is possible for him to get through. Let the Londoner work as hard as he will, he still finds there is more to be done than he can quite accomplish. When he wakes in the morning, it is with no vague feeling of wonder as to what may turn up for him to do; he knows enough is left from the previous day to occupy all his time; it is a race with him from the cradle to the grave; not always a Race for Wealth, friends, but oftentimes, alas! a Race for Bread.

Striving, fighting, working; always busy; never idle; meeting with competition at every turn; having his wits daily sharpened by necessity and experience, the Londoner becomes superficially clever, and preternaturally active. Farther, he never knows of his own knowledge the meaning of the word "ennui;" the day is never too long for him — not even the twenty-first of June has hours enough in it for the arrears to be got under — the balance to be accurately struck.

The days are moments, the years months; and it was with the intensest surprise that Lawrence Barbour, counting up the length of his sojourn in London, found he had passed four summers there; four summers and four winters, and that it was February again, and the

anniversary of his coming to the great Babylon once more.

For the years had passed like a watch in the night. Looking back, he could not realise to himself that the time had come, and the time had gone, so rapidly; he could scarcely believe he had entered London a boy, and that he was now a man; and yet in those four years he had lived longer than during the score passed previously in the country.

He was still in Mr. Perkins' employment, though not an inmate of Mr. Perkins' house; further contributions to the domestic establishment on the part of Mrs. Perkins, rendering such an arrangement as inconvenient to the chemist, as distasteful to his kinsman.

From the back bed-room, from a perfect opera of juvenile woes, from the society of "the mother of a family," from the contemplation of Ada's hair, from meals graced by the presence of the entire household — a baby in arms included — from tin saucepans, and horsehair chairs, — behold Lawrence translated to "apartments," — to three rooms in a house, concerning which I shall have more to say hereafter, — to furniture of his own, to tea and coffee that he made for himself, to dinners and suppers which he ordered on his own responsibility.

This change had come about on the occasion of one of those events when the assistance of Lawrence's natural enemy was considered necessary.

As it never seemed to enter into Mr. Perkins' head that his house required enlarging, Lawrence took it upon him to hint that the family needed reducing; and although both Mr. and Mrs. Perkins u[illegible] main, remarking that they could ma[illegible]

the young man steeled himself against all entreaties, and moved into the apartments of which honourable mention has already been made.

"It is preparatory to his getting married, my dear," was Mrs. Jackson's comment on the affair, to which Mrs. Perkins on her first day of receiving visitors groaned out a resolute dissent.

"Do you think Miss Alwyn would come and live *there?*" she asked. "No, not if she was in love with him fifty times over, and him twice as sweet on her as he is."

"I did not say he was going to bring her to Mrs. Pratting's first floor," answered Mrs. Jackson. "I only said it looked like getting married, and so it does. If not marriage, what else? What would a young man like him investigate in furniture for, if not with a view of settling? With my own two eyes I saw his rooms yesterday, and more beautiful rooms, I will say, could not be found in Limehouse. He has a piano, and a couple of easy-chairs, and a carpet all moss and green leaves, and hangings of damask — worsted damask, for I felt it with my bare hand — and a round table, and a chiffonnière with a lot of gimcracks on it, not decanters, and cut tumblers, and such useful things as we have on our sideboard, — but glass 'gobbelets,' I think Mrs. Pratting called them, that looked big enough, but that weren't a feather-weight in your hand when you lifted them, — and a large china vase, like what you would see in a grocer's window, and gilt flower-holders that were mighty fine and pretty, — and a naked woman riding on a lion, and a couple of other figures without a stitch on them, — not a blessed rag than that baby wore when it came into the world,

— which I thought were barely decent, and that I know I would bundle out of the window pretty sharp if Samuel brought them home to me, — and the arm-chairs were covered with velvet — real Geneva velvet, Mrs. Pratting assured me, — and he has got a clock on the mantel-shelf, with two more naked boys sprawling on it, and spill-boxes, and lustres, and cigar-cases, and, — my dear, you must go and see it for yourself."

"And, oh! I forgot to tell you," she continued, without giving Mrs. Perkins time to answer, "over the piano there is a linengraph of a young lady that is as like Miss Alwyn, Mrs. Pratting tells me, as two peas."

"'And well, Mrs. Pratting,' says I, 'if so be as how Miss Alwyn is like that, she is like a disreputable baggage, which is all the remark I have got to make on the subject.'

"With that, you'd a' thought she was going to jump out of her skin with fear; and 'Hush, hush, ma'am if you please, for there is some people as lives in this house, and pays their rent regular week by week, and the tradespeople honourable, as has got two pair of ears, and half a dozen sets of eyes, and I won't mention no names for fear of accidents;' to which I made answer that we were in a free country, and all equals in the sight of God; and that, if he had left any of his ears or eyes behind him, he was welcome to my opinions about the young woman in the chemise.

"'He can't send you to Newgate, Mrs. Pratting,' I wound up with, 'for anything I say; and if he was here himself, I would say just the same to him.'

"'But if he knew I had showed you the rooms, he would be so angry.'

"'Would he?' says I. 'W[illegible]s backward

in showing him mine, nor making him welcome to a cup of tea, or a glass of hot brandy and water, which, I will do him the justice to say, he was not above accepting; and, if it was not that you are a lone woman, Mrs. Pratting, and that the rent is, perhaps, as you say, an object, I would be downright angry with you for making such a fuss over Mr. Lawrence Barbour, who is no better nor a servant, so to speak; and is not even on his own account, nor a householder like yourself, Mrs. Pratting.'"

I wish it were possible for me to sketch Mrs. Perkins and Mrs. Jackson as they looked to an outsider, while the soap-boiler's wife thus gossiped over my hero's affairs. If it might be that each reader could see the pair for himself, how far superior would such a sight prove than any description put into any form of words? The only time in her existence, perhaps, when Mrs. Perkins looked even passable, was on those not rare occasions on which she was "at home" in her bedroom, and "received" in a dressing-gown and night-cap. The absence of colours — dingy or gay — was an immense improvement to her appearance; and the consciousness that she had done her duty, and fulfilled her mission, imparted a certain dignity to her general deportment which was a desirable change from her usual fussy manner.

Further, she had her own peculiar ideas of etiquette, and a portion of this etiquette consisted in having a Bible and Prayer-book constantly beside her. Regularly as a baby arrived on the scene, that Bible and Prayer-book were produced. They came out with the white dimity; when the chintz hangings were taken down and the snowy curtains put up, the orthodox

volumes were disinterred from their own especial corner in Mrs. Perkins' fancy drawer, which contained her sleeves, collars, ribbon-bows, Sunday brooch, and such like, and laid on the table beside the bed, not for use, but for ornament.

They were put there, Lawrence always thought, for the same purpose as some captains carry a "caul" to sea with them, as charms against danger. They were both full of markers, made of perforated cardboard, with texts embroidered on some, while others bore such mundane sentences of affection and entreaty, as "For Susannah Anne," "Remember me!" "Dinna Forget!" "I love thee!" "Near to my heart!" the heart being worked in blue and red and green floss silk, in that uncomfortable shape which hearts are popularly supposed to resemble, with a border of shamrocks, or roses, or fancy leaves, running round the edge.

These books had a subduing effect on Mrs. Perkins, the same as standing in a cathedral produces on many persons, and the nurse induced a still greater quietude of address; the chemist's wife always felt, as she phrased it, "quite the lady," when she was being looked after and attended to, having nothing to think of, as Lawrence's natural enemy declared, but herself, and nothing to do but "take her victuals reg'lar," a part of the performance which, it may incidentally be remarked, the nurse by no means neglected on her own account.

Altogether, those were very happy days in Mrs. Perkins' estimation; and, as she assured Mrs. Jackson, it gave her real pleasure to see "[illegible] as was a

enough to hold it. I declare he used to scare me, coming out of his room in the middle of the night, when I were a-going down into the kitchen to get a cup of tea for you, ma'am, coming out half-dressed, and with that shock of hair tumbled all over his head. 'For the love of 'eaven, Mrs. Nettlefield,' he would say, 'do gag the devil;' and he would stand there, and curse in the dark night till he had me all of a tremble. And then he would ask me, if I would not give him sleep, to give him at any rate a drop of my gin — as if gin was a thing I accustomed myself to! and I could hear him laughing to himself when he went back to his bed. Many a time I wondered no judgment fell on him."

"Well, we can only speak about people as we finds them," answered Mrs. Perkins. "And though he may not have made himself agreeable to you, Mrs. Nettlefield, I must say he was always most genteel and affable to me. It is trying, if you come to think of it, for anybody not a mother to be wakened out of his first sleep — and it was not too much he had in those days; and you can't expect a boy, as one may say he was then, to have the feelings of the father of a family. For my part, I always did like him, and I always shall." Whereupon Mrs. Jackson expressed her opinion that it was a pity "he had fell in, as he had, getting extravagant notions, and tastes above his class."

At that Mrs. Perkins fired up.

"Let me tell you, Mrs. Jackson," she said, "as how the Barbours of Mallingford used to associate along with the nobility; and as for the Alwyns being above [illegible]nce Barbour in station, they are no such thing:

Mr. Sondes himself says so, and you will allow him to be a judge, I hope. And to this day, when he goes to his native place, he always stays a few days with my Lord Lallard, which I saw one day at St. George's, and a plainer, pleasanter spoken man I would not wish to meet with. 'Will you come home with me, little girl,' he says to Ada; and I thought to myself at the time, poor man, he'd be glad to have one like her; for I am given to understand they have neither chick nor child. So as I was a-saying of, Mrs. Jackson, it is no rise in the world for Lawrence to be thick with the Alwyns, for he comes of good people, and has got good blood in his veins."

"I don't see that it would do him much good to have the queen for his aunt, or to go and stay at Windsor Castle, if he had to work hard for his bread all the same," retorted Mrs. Jackson. "What I look to, and what the most of people looks to, is what a man is, not what his relations have been; and if Mr. Barbour be, as I were a-remarking to Mrs. Pratting, nothing better nor a servant, it seems to me he ought not to put up to gilt ornaments and Geneva velvet chairs, and make a rout about folks, who could buy him and sell him, just looking in at his rooms."

"It is one thing, Mrs. Jackson, to ——" began Mrs. Perkins, in defence of her kinsman; but at this moment there appeared a much better advocate, sent by Lawrence, to plead his cause.

"With Mr. Barbour's kindest regards, mum, and to say he hopes you and the child are going on well;" said Mrs. Perkins' maid-of-all-work, entering the room, and presenting to her mistress over the towel-horse a parcel which she held in one corner of her coarse

apron, because, as she explained, her hands were black-leady.

"Is he there? Is he gone?" demanded Mrs. Perkins.

"Yes, ma'am; I asked him if he wouldn't step in, but he said no, that his dinner would be waiting for him;" and Jane, about the tenth servant whose life Mrs. Perkins had made a weariness since Lawrence first entered Distaff Yard, lingered in the room, curious to see what was in the parcel delivered by Mr. Barbour in person.

"A pair of scissors! oh, dear! Mrs. Nettlefield, have you got a pair of scissors?" exclaimed Mrs. Perkins, after vainly fighting with the intricacies of a draper's knot. "Run and get a knife, Jane;" but Jane, whose ingenuity was of a practical description, had already cut the string with a pair of snuffers that lay on the mantelpiece, and four heads were bent inquiringly over the parcel as Mrs. Perkins unwrapped brown paper, and blue paper, and white paper, and finally exposed to view a baby's robe.

"Well I declare!" It was Mrs. Jackson who broke the silence with this original observation, and Jane immediately followed suit with, "Oh, law!" and essayed, having first carefully clothed her finger and thumb with the skirt of her dress, to touch the marvellous present.

In a moment Mrs. Perkins' indignation was excited. "Would she dare to dirty it, to soil the blessed infant's christening garment?" And thereupon Mrs. Perkins took occasion to rebuke Jane for being an "idle slut," who never got her work done in time; but stood gossiping, and was a disgrace to be seen going to the door any respectable house.

To which Jane could doubtless have made answer, had she been so disposed, but deeming discretion the better part of valour, and remembering a half-sovereign just presented to her by Mr. Barbour — the much-enduring Ganymede went rather off into ecstasies over the frock, which was — "French, Mrs. Nettlefield — French, every thread of it;" and Mrs. Jackson looked up at the nurse as she said this, as though daring that strong-minded individual to contradict her.

"It would not cost one farthing less than five guineas," went on the soap-boiler's wife, appraising the gift, as such women do, — "not one farthing."

"Did you ever see anything like that, nurse?" asked Mrs. Perkins; exultantly; and the nurse was fain to confess she never had but once, and that was when she was "attending of the lady of Sir 'Umphrey 'All, who was at one time Lord Mayor of London.

"And one of the godmothers, a widow lady as lived at Clapham, and kept a full suite of servants, and drove out regular in her carriage and pair, sent a robe of the same description to the baby, and gave two golden guineas to me," added Mrs. Nettlefield, in slighting reference to Lawrence, who had never thought it needful to present her — no, not with a fourpenny bit.

"Well, I wonder, I do, where that young Barbour gets the money," remarked Mrs. Jackson to her husband, as she bustled about and made tea on her return home.

"What money?" asked Mr. Jackson, from behind his newspaper.

"Why, all he has to spend. I was telling you about his rooms yesterday, though I don't think you heard a word I said, through being fast asleep at the

time; but his rooms are splendid — fit for a duke; and to-day, while I was at Mrs. Perkins', there comes a christening-robe as might have done for the Prince of Wales. A fool and his money is soon parted, we know; but, then, where does he get it? I only hope and trust he is not taking it off poor Mr. Perkins — a sensible, respectable man as you would wish to meet with."

"Mrs. J.," said Mr. Jackson, severely, "do you know what you are talking about?"

"Yes, I do; better than you, at any rate, when you come home from one of your vestry dinners," retorted his better-half.

"Because," calmly went on Mr. Jackson, "it strikes me you don't, when you ask where that young man gets his money, and hopes as he earns it honestly."

"Well, you can't buy furniture that is grand enough for the Pope of Rome, and keep yourself, and pay rent, and washing and mending besides, out of a hundred and fifty pounds a year — and that is every half-penny, Mrs. Perkins tells me, he earns."

"Well, Mr. Sondes told me, no later than half an hour ago, that there was not a cleverer young man in London than that same Lawrence Barbour. 'He invented a thing,' he went on, 'which will save me five hundred a year. I am going to patent it,' he says, 'and have given him a cheque for two hundred and fifty pounds —'"

"Lor'-a-mercy! two hundred and fifty pounds all in a lump!" exclaimed Mrs. Jackson. "Likely it was out of that he bought the frock!"

"'And now, I suppose,' says I to Mr. Sondes," proceeded Mr. Jackson, taking off his spectacles and

wiping them, and then putting them on again with sublime deliberation, "'you'll be taking him into partnership — securing the genius to the concern.'"

"And I suppose he is," broke in Mrs. Jackson.

"I think not," answered her husband. "'Mr. Barbour is a very rising young man,' Mr. Sondes remarked; 'but there are two sides to every question, and there are two sides to this;' and if I'm not greatly mistaken," observed the speaker, on his own account, "the other side in this case is the Alwyns. You can just remember what I say, Martha — it is the Alwyns."

"Likely enough; and I would not be one bit surprised if Miss Alwyn chose that frock for him. I don't think it's like a man's buying," in which conjecture Mrs. Jackson chanced, however, to be wrong, for the present was very much like a man's purchase indeed.

"And it is not the first thing Mr. Barbour has invented," went on Mr. Jackson; "nor the first money Mr. Sondes has paid him. So you see there are more ways of getting rich than Mrs. Perkins knows of; and that hundred and fifty pounds may be, after all, but a very small part of the young man's income."

"Well, you do surprise me," said Mrs. Jackson.

"Ay; and I have got something else to tell you that may be a greater surprise," chuckled the soap-boiler. "As I was a-coming down Three-Colt Street to-day, who should I run up against but that young swell we saw the evening we went over to Distaff Yard to inquire about Mr. Barbour after his hurt. I mean a young chap with queer-coloured hair, and quite another cut entirely from Perkins' cousin; you remember him, don't you?"

"Yes; that got a cup of coffee upset over his sum-

mer trousers — Ada did it — and who laughed till he was fit to drop when Mrs. Perkins offered to have them sent to the dyers and cleaned for him, and then you told him he ought to send the bill in to Mr. Perkins, and make him pay the damage. 'I don't think my tailor would mind how many cups of coffee were upset, if an arrangement of that kind could be entered into,' I remember he said; 'poor devil! he can scarcely recollect what the colour of my money is like.' A cheery young fellow; what about him, Samuel? what was he doing in Limehouse?"

"I had no notion he would remember me," resumed the soap-boiler; "and, indeed, I could not think for the moment where I had seen him, when he stops me and says — 'I am sure you and I have met in some place before, and ought to know each other.' 'Well, I am sure I ought to know you, sir, for your face is familiar; but one sees so many faces in business.' 'Ah! it wasn't in business you saw mine,' he said. 'Ain't you a friend, or relation, or something of Mr. Perkins in Distaff Yard? I met you there, and now I have come to live down here beside you.'"

"For any sake, where?" inquired Mrs. Jackson.

"That is what I was going on to tell you," her husband replied; "you know that ship-building place, with the beautiful house, over the bridge; well, my gentleman is one of the junior partners in that concern; and is living on the premises. 'I am going to run a race with Barbour,' he says, 'and we are intending to try which of us can die worth half a million.' He is the same as ever. 'Come over and see me,' he remarked, quite friendly. 'Come over and see me pro-

miscuous. Make my respects to your worthy lady; she is well, I hope?"

"Quite the gentleman!" exclaimed Mrs. Jackson, drawing a deep sigh, for she had held her breath during the preceding narrative till she was almost suffocated. "Quite the gentleman! and I hope, Samuel, you told him we had always a spare knife and fork, and took tea at five, and a bite of supper at nine."

"Yes, I did: and he said he would come over and call upon you, and then, if you gave him permission, he might drop in occasionally. 'Mrs. Jackson always makes my friends welcome, sir,' I made free to remark, and at that he laughed, and said, 'Of course, all wives do; but still they like the ceremony of being consulted, nevertheless;' not a bad hit, I thought, — not by no means."

Whatever Mrs. Jackson thought of the hit, it detracted somewhat from her admiration of Mr. Percy Forbes. "Likely as not," she decided, "he is one of them young jackanapeses who think to wind women round their fingers like a skein of silk. He'll not find me one of the soft ones," she mentally affirmed; but yet, when the young man fulfilled his promise, and called upon her; when he sat in her best parlour and would not "lay down his hat during the whole visit, — no, not trust it out of his hand, let her say what she liked;" when he discoursed to her about Limehouse and his new home, and criticised the clergyman, and talked about business "as sensible like as her husband," and condoled with her on the loss of her children, and promised to send her round some flowers out of his own conservatory, and asked her to come and see the view

of the river from his lawn — Mrs. Jackson was enchanted.

"Now that is the kind of young man for my money," she remarked, in a moment of unguarded confidence to Mr. Sondes. "I was just saying to Samuel, that if I was a young gurl and single, I would give Mr. Forbes no rest till he married me."

"How fortunate it is, then, for Mr. Forbes that you are neither," Mr. Sondes replied, and this reply Mrs. Jackson subsequently repeated to Percy Forbes, who declared his view of the matter to be "widely different."

"God only knows how you can endure those people," observed Lawrence Barbour to him one day.

"My dear fellow, variety is charming," answered Mr. Forbes. "It is well for a man to see a little of all sorts; and as Providence has cast my lot due east, I am determined to make the best of the dispensation."

"If any body had left me eight thousand pounds, I would have seen Limehouse at the devil before coming to live in it," said Lawrence.

"Well, I was going to the devil," retorted Mr. Forbes, "and I thought if ever I meant to turn and go the other road, it was time for me to do so. Had I stayed at the West-end, I should have been in as bad a plight as ever before two years were over; but now, Mr. Barbour, now I am going to try to beat you."

"No great trouble for you to do that, with all the money on your side," was the reply.

"And all the cleverness on yours," returned Percy Forbes; and with that they parted.

CHAPTER XX.

Percy Forbes.

As a rule, people are not inquisitive concerning the antecedents of those whom they know slightly.

In London, at all events, no man thinks it worth his while to inquire into the birth, parentage, family, and reputed wealth of any individual whom he may chance occasionally to meet in society, and speak to for five minutes at a time. He sees that his new acquaintance has been born, that he appears before his fellows, not merely in the flesh, but also in that special style and quality of attire which is most affected by the class they apparently mutually belong to; that his manners are those of a gentleman, that he appears to be educated like his neighbours, that he is clever or the reverse as God has given him talents and he has employed them; and the rest is taken for granted. Where he lives, who he is, what are his actual means, what his exact genealogy — all these things have little or no interest for the ordinary man or woman of the world who has no daughters to marry, no plans to carry out, no desire to push acquaintanceship on into intimacy, no object to serve by prying into the former days of anyone's life, — who, in a word, attaches no value to a stranger's name save in so far as a name is sometimes a convenient mode of address, and who does not care a straw whether the person who is talking to him be called John Oakes or Tom Styles, so long as his talk be sufficiently clever or amusing to make the minutes pass more swiftly than their

But supposing there are daughters to marry, a partnership of any kind proposed, a new company to be formed, or a government appointment to be obtained; supposing, in fact, interest — either a pecuniary, or a worldly, or an affectionate interest — steps in, how swiftly the aspect of affairs changes.

"Can you tell me anything about So-and-so?" you remark to your host; and if your host be communicative and well-informed, you suck all the knowledge out of him, and digest the contents of that human orange at your leisure.

In the case of mere friendship, perhaps, which is more trustful, you turn to the man himself for such particulars as you desire to obtain. Not always out of pure love, but oftentimes it may be out of a little curiosity, you lead him artfully on to speak of his dead father, his old home, the disappointments of his life, his hopes for the future, his sorrows, and his joys.

The more nearly man approaches to man, the more closely two people draw to one another, the less social credit are they, as a rule, disposed to extend. Limitless is the careless trust in the case of a couple of strangers, boundless the suspicious curiosity when those strangers become friends.

In precise proportion as a man is known, friendship seems to distrust him. No open accounts, no balance carried over, no bills at long dates, no discounts, no drawings beyond the exact amount of the sums deposited.

Without confidence full and entire, without the whole of the title-deeds of a man's past doings being lodged with his friend as security, credit is stopped on the spot, the cheques come back with N. S. marked

upon them, and the man has oftentimes to turn out again into the social desert where he is asked no questions because nobody cares much about him; where dinner, supper, bad music, and superficial conversation are to be had *ad libitum* on the credit of a social standing, to which, perhaps, the former friend of his bosom does not consider the individual who refuses to be communicative, entitled.

To a certain extent this same rule holds good with regard to those characters which are called fictitious. So long as one of these is mentioned but slightly — plays no important part — seems, in fact, to be but a walking gentleman through the course of a page or two, the reader accepts him as he accepts the by no means remarkable-looking stranger who sits opposite to him at dinner, and asks for no further information concerning him; but let it only be intimated that the individual in question is about to travel through the book — to be mixed up with the men and the women who occupy the most prominent positions in the story; and attention is at once excited, curiosity at once aroused.

That author who should presume to leave the antecedents of such a "waif" in doubt, unless with the intention of explaining some dark mystery connected with him in the last chapter of the third volume, would be thought guilty of the unpardonable sin — considered as unworthy of trust and sympathy, as deserving of instant excommunication as the misguided man who, having hidden away in his skeleton-closet a grinning skull and cross-bones — the dead remains of some once hideous sorrow, the memory of which is lying between himself and his Maker — shall yet refuse to

unlock the door to his compassionate friends, and deliver an anatomical lecture over the corpse of that which he has never been able to bury out of his own sight — banish completely from his own memory.

Herein, however, the author and the reader have the best of it. What friend (given the chance to do so) would hesitate to throw open the skeleton-chamber of his dear acquaintance and close neighbour? And is not the author the friend of his characters, the mutual friend of the public and the people to whom he ventures to introduce that public?

Has not he a right at any stage of the proceedings to hold an inquest on the bones — to make forcible entry into the castle of a man's past experiences, to bring up witnesses, to empannel a jury, and to expose the abortion which, although it may not receive Christian burial, can still be exhibited and dissected for the edification of society.

Having this right, feeling this necessity, I let the story of Lawrence Barbour's life stand still for a time while I state some particulars concerning the birth, education, parentage, and worldly position of Percy Forbes, whose name has been so often mentioned in the foregoing pages, and who, from this time forth, commences as he said, half in jest, half in earnest, to run a race for wealth with Lawrence Barbour.

Hitherto, fortune had used the young man but scurvily. In a mere worldly point of view, few people could have told a sadder tale than Percy Forbes; and when he said in Hyde Park that Lawrence Barbour was an even more unlucky dog than himself, he either greatly overrated the reverses of Lawrence's family, or else (as is the case with many individuals who, having

been "under a cloud" all their lives, are apt to think their individual troubles less than they appear to their neighbours) he underrated his own.

To him misfortune was merely a not deadly chronic disease. It had been pap to him in his babyhood, his playfellow when a boy, his "inseparable," as he himself said laughingly, when once he arrived at years of discretion. For all his cheery manner, his light heart, his gay temper, Percy Forbes had his especial skeleton-closet; a closet by no means full, remember, nor as yet tenanted by many ghosts of his own manufacture; but still not empty of disappointments, wrongs, insults, cruelty, and suffering. It was a closet he never voluntarily opened; but those favoured individuals who had once enjoyed a peep into the apartment, were not delicate about telling of the hard cold man who having married a young girl, whose only sin consisted in having loved a poor suitor as she never could love Mr. Clarence Forbes, drove her and her child from his house with foul suspicions, and worse epithets; and, repudiating them both, lived all alone in his great house in Buckinghamshire till the death of his wife, when he married a lady of title, who bore him sons and daughters, and before whom, if popular report were to be believed, he dare not say his soul was his own, or his body, or his estate either, for that matter.

Cast out of the paternal mansion, with no worldly possessions of his own, unless, indeed, a coral and bells, a silver christening cup, a Bible with a great gilt cross on the back of it, some white babies'-frocks, made of the best materials and elaborately embroidered under-linen to match, a broken-hearted mother, [illegible] father's malediction, can be strictly speaking

goods and chattels, — Percy Forbes made his next essay of starting in life in the house of his mother's uncle, who, having amassed a large fortune out of sugars, had long retired from business and purchased a snug property in Warwickshire.

He was a bachelor, and took kindly to the widow and her infant; so kindly, indeed, that he promised Mrs. Forbes, when she lay dying, to "see to Percy," and "push him up in the world; that is," added the old gentleman, "if I cannot prevail on his father to do justice to him."

The mother died; Percy grew apace; his father refused to recognise his existence. Had Mrs. Forbes lived and regained sufficient physical strength ever to have faced her position, no doubt she would have striven to right herself with her husband and society. As it was, innocent, though evil spoken of, she passed away, leaving Percy a dependant on his uncle's bounty, and with no private fortune of his own, except the articles of which due and honourable mention has been made, together with a miniature of his mother, set in pearls, a lock of her hair, a few trinkets, and the poor young creature's blessing.

Yes, one thing more she left him, which seemed, as the years went by, a treasure of great value in the eyes of Percy Forbes. It was her story, her defence, her true defence, as the young man compelled his father to acknowledge, when for nineteen years the grass had been growing over her grave.

Time opens a man's eyes sometimes as well as facts; the hard rule of Lady Gertrude had, perhaps, something to do with Mr. Forbes' admission of haste, jealous suspicion, absence of proof, harsh judgment.

"Your mother never loved me," remarked the old man; he had grown very weak and very feeble; he was cold, and hard, and cruel no more, but simply ailing and decrepid; "and when I found out that, I could have killed her in my rage. She ought not to have married me; but, except in marrying me, I believe she was innocent of any wrong. If appearances were against her, was that my fault? Are you going to make me answerable for misery which was none of my own seeking. You say you do not want money; that you would not come and live here if I asked you. What then do you want? Why can you not leave me in peace now she is dead and gone, dead and gone."

"I want an acknowledgment under your hand that you were mistaken in your suspicions. It is one thing to go out poor into the world, it is another to go out branded; and I do not intend to be branded," finished Mr. Percy Forbes, as he stood, with the sun shining full upon him, beside the table at which his father was seated.

The sons and the daughters of Lady Gertrude were not the most amiable sons and daughters ever born into this world; they had ways of their own, and ideas of her ladyship's implanting, which rendered them far from agreeable companions to the unfortunate individual Lady Gertrude had consented to marry, and for a moment Mr. Forbes, looking at Percy's open handsome face, considered how it might answer to bring his first-born home again, and keep the others in check with the terror of his mere presence.

But he had not courage to do it.

brave enough to turn a timid helpless woman adrift, but to defy Lady Gertrude was quite another matter.

"I wish — I wish to heaven the estates were entailed, Percy," he said, after some further conversation, writing out, as he made this observation, the letter his son desired; "and then, then there could be no dispute about the matter, could there?"

Percy was unable to see the exact point of this sentence. It seemed to him that, if his father chose, there need be no dispute about the matter in any case, but he answered —

"I do not care a rush about the estates, sir. I am never likely to want money as long as it is to be had by those who are willing to work hard; but I do care about *her* good name, and so, if, when you come to make your will, you would remember to say that you leave to your eldest son, Percy Forbes, one shilling, the bequest will satisfy me. It will take the stain away from both of us, and settle the question of her innocence for ever."

"Can I do nothing for you now, Percy? I never have any ready money, but —"

"Let those who have usurped our place — those whom you have set above us — spend your money," Percy interposed. "I do not ask you for house, or acre, or tree, or guinea, but simply for justice — for one shilling, and an admission that I have a right to the name I bear. Promise to do so much for me; it is all I want — it is all I expect."

And after his father had promised — after Mr. Forbes had written out the letter, Percy demanded — parent and son went through the ceremony of shaking

hands, which they dispensed with in the first instance, and parted never to meet again.

Bravely the young man had renounced all hopes of inheritance — all chance of wealth. Boldly, but scarcely wisely, he had vacated the field after achieving his barren victory, leaving it to others to gather the spoil. He had yielded up the advantages of his birthright without a struggle; and, while speaking to his father, he had scarcely felt the sacrifice; but as he walked away from Carris Copse — as he looked at wood, and park, and lawn, and garden — as he met the two sons of Lady Gertrude, who passed him with a haughty stare, but evidently without the slightest idea who he really was, Percy began to feel that his position was a very hard one, that the letter he had in his pocket could not quite right him in the sight of the world — that even, if his uncle left him all his money, it was not so easy as he had theoretically imagined to see Carris Copse, and not wish to possess it.

When he was a long way from the house, quite sheltered from observation by overarching trees, and the windings of the avenue, he stood still and looked back — looked at the house which was never to be his, the estate which lay stretching away towards the west, so rich, so fair, so extensive — long and wistfully.

Few young men in his place but would have vowed some vow, would have planned some project, would have formed some resolution; but not so Percy Forbes.

The strength of his character lay rather in his power of adapting himself to circumstances than of his capability in overcoming difficulties. All his life he had been an alien. The blow had not fallen suddenly.

Never having been brought up to expect anything, to resign came easy; and so without even an effort to supplant his brothers and sisters, Percy Forbes having said his say, and taken his first look over Carris Copse, turned him again to business, and went back to the situation his uncle had procured for him in London.

Many people thought it strange that so rich a man as Mr. Lewin should wish his nephew to engage in business at all; but to such objectors the ex-merchant stated his opinion that it was best for every person to "hang on his own hook;" that "he would not have anybody waiting for his shoes;" that Percy was as well able to make his way in the world as he (Mr. Lewin) had been; that for twenty years he (Mr. Lewin again) had fed, clothed, lodged, educated, and otherwise provided for the son of his niece; "and to end the matter," finished Mr. Lewin one day addressing his nephew, who had never offered a remonstrance or expressed a wish on the subject, "because your father don't choose to do his duty by you, I'm hanged if I think it fair that everybody should expect me to make up the deficiency in your account myself."

"Do you mean the money deficiency?" Percy asked. "Because if you do," went on the young man, "and it is the only deficiency I know of that you have not more than made up, I can truthfully say I feel I have not the slightest claim upon you; and further, if you were to tell me to leave the house to-morrow and bid me never cross your threshold again, I should still know I owed you such a debt of gratitude for your kindness to me and to her as I never could repay while I had breath in my body."

At this Mr. Lewin softened. "I believe you, lad,"

he answered; "and it is hard for all the idle words and senseless guesses of a country-side to be laid at your door. But mind you, Percy, you must work. Do not depend on my leaving you anything, or being able to help you further, now you have got a good situation and the chance of pushing yourself on in the world. I am sorry your father has not done something for you, though — very; because I cannot. I am not so rich as you imagine, and I have expenses, heavy expenses. I am perfectly frank, to save you from all disappointment hereafter. Do not let Mr. Alwyn puff you up with the notion that you are to be my heir. You are to be no such thing. There now, lay my words to heart and remember them. I am sorry to notice you growing extravagant and foppish in your dress. Do not let Alwyn fill your head full of false notions; but be steady; come and see me often, and there is a trifle towards paying your travelling expenses."

Such was the burden of Mr. Lewin's song in the days when Percy Forbes was first horse in the Alwyn stable, when the Alwyns, father and daughter, both considered the young man very eligible indeed, when he was always being invited to Hereford Street, or asking at the Shoreditch Station for a "first-class single" to Mallingford; when Mr. Alwyn, taking up his parable, prophesied great things of his future, and had vague ideas that at some subsequent, though he hoped not very remote period, Percy would come "into his own," and be induced to contemplate a double partnership on terms mutually advantageous, and hereafter to be agreed upon.

CHAPTER XXI.

Percy's Legacy.

In those — the early days of his London experience, Percy Forbes was a very happy man. If Miss Alwyn were not his first flame, she was, at all events, his fiercest, and Henrietta Alwyn had something more than a mere liking for her father's favourite, for the faithful servant who fetched and carried at her bidding like a dog, who was her most obedient humble slave, who was so much handsomer than any of her other admirers, and so much younger to boot.

Though his uncle told him not to depend on being his heir, Percy could scarcely avoid regarding his relative in the light of a banker; and it is something more than likely that, as his devotion to Miss Alwyn increased, so his demands on his uncle's purse became heavier.

By no means loath was the young lady to receive presents, and Percy was so willing a steed, she found there existed no necessity to spur him on. Much better informed, his uncle soon discovered Percy to be, as to the contents of jewellers' shops than as to the prices of colonial produce. He stood aghast, poor man, when he ascertained, "with the evidence of his own ears," as he explained, that Percy knew a great deal more about flower-shows and regattas, operas and the latest novels, than about banking business, custom-house clearances, protested bills, and legitimate acceptances.

"Take care, take care, Percy," said the old man;

"I am afraid I did a bad day's work when I got you into Alwyn's office. Mind what you are about, or else it may chance that you will go to bed some night thinking yourself a wise man, and rise up in the morning knowing you have been a fool. If I were in your shoes, I should not idle, but work. That is my advice. You can take it or leave it, just as it suits you."

As a matter of courtesy, Percy took the advice, but dropped it before a week was over. He liked better to be dangling attendance on Miss Alwyn than to sit at a desk in the City, and run about to banks, and counting-houses, and lawyers'-offices like an errand boy.

Life in Hereford Street was quite to his taste, excepting perhaps that Miss Alwyn possessed too many admirers, which was not her fault, poor girl. It was idle, luxurious, amusing. Life in the City, on the contrary, grew day by day more hateful to him.

"When I am the head of a firm like your father," he said on one occasion to the young lady, "when I can sit in state in my inner office, and read the newspapers, and write cheques, and give orders right and left, and be denied to bores, — I will stick to business like a leech; but till there is blood to be got out of the commercial body, a very little work goes a long way with me."

At which speech Miss Alwyn looked a little conscious, and led Mr. Percy Forbes on till that young gentleman trembled on the very verge of a declaration, when the *tête-à-tête* was interrupted, and the opportunity lost for ever.

That night, Mr. Lewin's w[illegible]. His

nephew went to bed a wise man in his own esteem, to rise up the next morning feeling he had been a fool. Mr. Lewin was married — had been married for half a score of years to a former servant, whom he now brought home, determined, as he said, "to do the right thing at last." This was the news the morning brought to Percy Forbes, who had sense enough to show no disappointment, but who felt in his heart that the blow was a heavy one.

Still the Alwyns made no difference in their conduct towards him; still he was free of the house, welcome to accompany Henrietta and her duenna to flower-shows and concerts; still there was a welcome for him at Mallingford, and still no remark was made about his neglect of business — only Miss Alwyn began to encourage a certain elderly baronet in his attentions to her beautiful self, and became so sisterly in her manner towards Percy, that he was fain to tell her one day, there existed no necessity for danger signals. "I am not going to trespass on that line, believe me, Hetty," he said; "you need not be afraid of my spoiling your matrimonial chances. I was once very near asking you to be my wife, but do not make yourself uneasy on that score; I shall never be so near making an idiot of myself again — not if my father were to give me Carris Copse to-morrow; so do not hold me at arm's length. I am too modest now to ask to touch even the hem of your garment."

From that day Percy Forbes had the best of the position; from that day, Henrietta Alwyn felt that, though the world might think him her slave, and though he might make no effort to undeceive the world, still he was free of her trammels.

And he was so handsome; and girls liked him so much; and he danced so divinely; and he was so distinguished looking!

"I wish to God," said Mr. Alwyn fervently, when some hitch occurred between Henrietta and the baronet, "that old Forbes would die, and leave Carris Copse to Percy."

"It would be so nice for him," answered Miss lwyn, ignoring the hidden meaning of her father's rds, but inwardly conscious that were her old adrer in possession of a gold mine, the chance of ring any portion of the treasure would never more e to her.

"Now, I wonder what I did," speculated the young ette; "I wonder how he happened to guess what passing through my mind. I wish he had not," wish proved, like most others of the same deon, perfectly unavailing. In Percy Forbes the ad met her match; she might cajole and she smile, and she might beckon him to her side, might come in obedience to her signal, and l smile, and flatter, too, but the love he had en her he could give no more; he was free; at ertainly; but still free; the witch had lost her nd Percy found he could wander outside the f Miss Alwyn's beauty and face the world, ever did not somehow seem so bright to him

ted to leave Mr. Alwyn's employment; he vould be easier for him to work elsewhere; nd he had for so long been scarcely on rms that he [illegible] to retain any

Loving pleasure and the business of idleness with all his heart, having acquired expensive tastes and extravagant habits, lacking moral courage to cut his old acquaintances, and turn his back on the follies and fashions of a world which he loved "not wisely but too well," Percy Forbes passed through the years resolving every day that on the morrow he would amend, and finding when the morrow dawned some bad reason why his good resolutions should not bear fruit until a future season.

But for his uncle's kindness the young man never could have got through those years even as he did, and at last matters came to such a crisis that Percy decided to "cut the concern," and deprive England of the advantage of his society.

"I will do it," he said to Mr. Perkins, who had got him one or two situations which he lost almost immediately. "I will go down to my uncle and make a clean breast of how I stand; give him a list of my debts; ask him to make some kind of an arrangement for me and emigrate. Which is the best colony for an able-bodied young fellow like myself to select? Come, you shall advise me. Canada, or New Zealand, or Australia."

"If you were only brave enough to work here as you will have to work there, I should say never leave London at all. Look at Barbour, how he is getting on, and still he takes his pleasure, too."

"Oh! hang Barbour," answered Mr. Forbes; "I am sick of hearing his name."

"Well, I only mentioned him to show you what a man can do who will stick to business during business hours. Of course I am different to both of you. I

never had a chance of mixing among the people you are intimate with; all the better for me, perhaps; but still, if I had been inclined for company, I could have gone to the bad as fast as any of you. Now, what are you laughing at?" broke off Mr. Perkins, looking in astonishment at Percy Forbes, who answered, that he was only laughing to see how much alike all men were. "I never hear anybody boast of the opportunities he has had of going to Heaven," he remarked; "but every person I meet tells me how readily he might have travelled the other road. However, I beg your pardon, Mr. Perkins, for interrupting you in the middle of a sentence. You were about to remark" —

"Just what you have taken out of my mouth; that I could have travelled the other road; that I might have been a beggar at this present minute, without a shoe to my foot, or a bed to lie on, if I had not stuck to my work, but taken a day's holiday here and another there, and spent my evenings drinking and playing cards instead of improving myself and making experiments. And look at me now," continued Mr. Perkins, warming with his subject: "I had not a sixpence of capital when I started in life; I had not a brass farthing."

"And if you had," interrupted Percy Forbes, "I suppose it would not have been of much use to you — commercially I mean."

"What a fellow you are," said the manufacturing chemist, half reproachfully, half admiringly; "but let me go on with what I was talking about. I started with nothing. I had no capital except my hands and my head, and I was not afraid of u d

see the result. I have kept myself, I have married and reared a family, I have always had a cut of cheese and a slice of bread and a glass of beer for any friend who liked to drop in. I have never wanted a coat to my back, or a sovereign in my pocket. We may not have indulged in many luxuries, but we have been very comfortable. I can give the children good educations; and if I died to-morrow the missus would not need to fret after me, for I have taken good care to put by for her, so that she shouldn't require to work her fingers to the bone. I often think about it all in church," went on Mr. Perkins, with a charming unconsciousness that there could seem anything objectionable in such a confession. "I often think about it all in church, and feel very grateful to my Creator for having kept me to my work. I am sure I don't know what I ever did that should make Him take such care of a plain, plodding chemist like me — I don't, indeed," and Mr. Perkins looked over towards Percy Forbes and paused, as if expecting that individual to help him to a solution of the difficult problem he had just propounded.

Percy Forbes' reply sounded a little ungracious.

"I am sure I don't either," he said; adding, next moment, "that is, I mean I suppose it does not much matter to Him whether a man is a chemist or a cabinet minister;" and then Percy Forbes fell into a brown study, one part of which consisted in a vague wonder how any man could be content with the portion of success that had fallen to the lot of his guest; and another in deciding that uncertainty in the far away lands of promise would seem to him better than such a certain destiny in England.

Accordingly, he ran down to his uncle's place, as

he told Mr. Perkins he should do; ran down and spent a day or two in Warwickshire, and talked matters over with his relative, who bemoaned Percy's indiscretion and extravagances, cursed his own shortsightedness in placing the lad with Mr. Alwyn, wished he had only put him with old Hunt and Harpe, who lived (Hunt he referred to) over his own office in Great Tower Street, and never aspired to such heights of gentility as Mr. Alwyn, though "I dare say, he would cut up better than Alwyn if they were both to die to-morrow."

"I am afraid, Percy," he finished, "I have not done so well for you as I might: I have done nearly as badly for you as you have done for yourself. Perhaps it would be better to change the scene, and get out of the way of temptation altogether; you are too like your poor mother to be up to the world and its ways, and your father cannot help you now if he would, I suppose. I hear the young ones are making ducks and drakes of Carris as fast as they know how. They — that is your father and her ladyship — have gone abroad to retrench, I am told; retrench! at the gambling-table most likely — should not wonder if Mr. Clarence Forbes comes to want before he dies."

"Well, I wish," began Percy, but at that point he stopped suddenly, and his uncle could not get him to proceed. "I was only thinking," he said, and then turned the conversation; but what he chanced to be thinking was this, "I wish somebody could be induced to give me a start, and I would try to make a better thing of my life yet."

He got a start on his return to town of rather a different kind to that he desired. His father was dead — had died in Germany; no one wrote a l:

on the subject, and all he knew he gathered from the newspapers. The body was brought over to England, and taken down to Carris for interment.

Percy attended the funeral merely as any stranger might have done. His brothers vouchsafed him only the scantiest courtesy; but the lawyers were more conciliatory, and recommended that he should be invited up to the house to hear the will read.

"He is the eldest son, remember," said Mr. Bourne, speaking on behalf of partner and self.

"Let him come, then," answered Ralph Forbes, sulkily and shortly. But Percy declined.

"The contents of the will could have no interest for him," he remarked; so, proof against all entreaties, he walked resolutely back to Carris Station, where he was waiting for the first train to town, when Mr. Bourne appeared on the platform.

"My dear young friend," he said, "allow me to congratulate you — that is, so far as congratulation, considering the present distressing circumstances, may be agreeable. You are entitled under your father's will to a legacy of eight thousand pounds."

"What does he call me?" asked Percy, quickly; "how does he style me?" he went on. "You know the story, doubtless. Does he speak of me as his son?"

"'To my beloved son, Percy Forbes,'" answered the lawyer, and Percy's breath came short while he said in a low tone, and as if not speaking to Mr. Bourne, —

"Thank God!"

CHAPTER XXII.

Percy's Partnership.

In the course of his life Percy Forbes had many a time before been a saint when sick, and a sinner when sound; many a time he had vowed to himself that he would turn over a new leaf — that he would make a better thing of existence, and, renouncing the pomps and vanities — the crowded ball-rooms, the select dinner-parties, the charming picnics, the pretty partners, the bewitching music of a world which looks for money at the hands of even its humblest votaries — flee from those pleasant haunts, where wealth is spent lavishly, and swear allegiance to the monarch of the shuttle and the loom, of the engine and the water-wheel, of the dingy workshop and the gigantic factory.

Many a time he had wakened in the night, and, thinking in the darkness of his sins and his shortcomings, of the debts he was contracting, of the years he was wasting, vowed vows of amendment, and planned projects of reformation and success; but the morning's light chased these unwelcome phantoms away, and the young man kept not to his intention of increasing his goods diligently, but rather hasted to squander his means recklessly.

The pace was pleasant, though the pace might be killing. After all, a man can but enjoy; and if he may not enjoy in youth, when dare happiness be counted upon?

This was the way he reasoned while he traversed the road to ruin as fast as his own inveterate love of

pleasure, and the temptations surrounding his path, could hurry him along.

Let him make what resolutions he liked overnight, they all vanished at daybreak. To be a saint on a moderate salary, in mean lodgings, with a slatternly landlady and a grubby servant, unable to mix in society, without everything, in fact, which had come to be meat, drink, air, and sunshine to him, surrounded by everything mean, common, sordid, and unrefined, seemed a consummation — desirable for some reasons, perhaps — but still too fearful to be contemplated with equanimity.

A saint installed in one of the lowest and most menial offices of the monastery is different from a saint lording it as abbot. Virtue as a comely British matron, driving through existence in a carriage drawn by a pair of unexceptionable horses, with tribes of servants; with troops of adoring tenantry; with her own pet clergyman preaching the sermon she liketh best to hear at the pretty church on the property, the advowson of which is in the gift of Virtue's husband; with her sons and daughters, like young olive plants, gathered round about her table (at dessert), or else grown up and married well; with a lady's maid who understands her business, and dresses hair to perfection; with a French cook and a treasure of a housekeeper — is a much more attractive individual than draggled-tailed Virtue, walking through the muddy streets, with patched boots, and cotton stockings, and a last year's bonnet, and hair done up anyhow, and a shabby purse with little in it, and a sorrowful worn look on her face — while she thinks of the difficulty of procuring employment, of the lad whom all her care has not been able to keep from

evil associates, of the girl whom she is trying to get into the Consumption Hospital, of the husband who died of delirium tremens, of the district visitors and model clergymen — who offer her, not stones, indeed, instead of bread, but tracts — of the friends she once had, who are now dead, or gone, or changed!

Truth is, in an age of luxury like ours, there is a something so repulsive in the face of poverty — however moral, or honest, or virtuous poverty may be — that a man who decides on wedding her, and keeps to that resolution, must be gifted with powers of will and determination far and away beyond any possessed by Percy Forbes.

He knew the match would be for his good, here and hereafter. He knew, although the one path was smooth and flowery, yet that its end was death temporal and spiritual; he knew that, however rough, however weary the other road might prove, it was at least the right one for him to travel; and yet he went on with the singing men and the singing women, eating the goblin fruit, quaffing the cup which turns to bitterness, till the end I have described arrived, when in the very blackest hour of his life help came almost at his call, when the two roads were again presented for him to select which he would tread; when he had given to him what few men have — a second chance, a second start, a second opportunity of retrieving the past, of redeeming the time.

Then Percy Forbes turned him at last out of the paths of pleasantness into the highway of work.

The opportunity for reform came to him, as it comes but to one man in ten thousand without a drawback.

He was not asked to walk through the mire, to fight his way painfully, to relinquish every comfort to which he had accustomed himself, to be at the beck and call of any illiterate snob, to sell his head and limbs, his fingers and his will for so many hours a-day, in order that he might obtain enough to live with the frugality of a hermit. If his lot were thrown among common people, it would be in a way that rather amused him than otherwise.

It is one thing to watch bees at work through a glass window and another to live in the cells. He was required by his own common sense to relinquish nothing except gaiety and fashion and folly — he was asked to do nothing save work and gather money. To such a man it might be a struggle to turn over a new leaf, but he knew if he did not turn it, the former bitter story he so well remembered would have to be read and re-read without a hope of a satisfactory termination again compensating for its misery.

In his heart Percy Forbes felt grateful to God for having given him such a chance of escape, and he vowed a vow to himself while soberly and thoughtfully he travelled back to London, that influenced and coloured every act of his future life.

He paid his debts whenever his legacy was handed over to him, and the creditors who had formerly been so pressing, and who now received their money by means of something very like a miracle, veered round and regarded Mr. Forbes as a very ill-used man, who ought to have stepped into possession of Carris Copse, and been able to give them unlimited orders for the future.

Truth to tell, the way Percy was tempted by those

men might have proved too much for him, but for the resolution previously mentioned.

He would give no more orders, he would take no more credit, he would never listen again to the voices of the charmers, charmed they never so wisely; he lived for a time in his old quarters, refusing all invitations, and very quietly laying his plans for the future. Then he dropped out of his old life, and the social place which had once known him so well, knew him no more for ever.

When he came to mix in the world again, it was on a much higher rung of the ladder he found himself than had been the case previously. There was no fear of that which was worked for honestly and perseveringly giving way beneath his feet. No more debts; no more duns; no more dread of meeting this man or that; no more mere present enjoyment at the price of those nightly scourgings — those broken resolutions, those accusing phantoms — but enjoyment earned fairly and justly; rest won by toil; happiness secured by the consciousness of duties faithfully performed, of work duly discharged.

When Percy Forbes started in the Race for Wealth, he flung aside every encumbrance likely to impede his progress, to hinder his success.

There is many a true word spoken in jest, and the words this young man used in speaking to Lawrence Barbour proved wonderfully prophetic.

"Now, Mr. Barbour, now I am going to try to beat you," he said, and the sentence was fulfilled literally; for, as the years went by, the pair still held on — now neck and neck, now one in advance, now the other. Labouring ever [illegible] wealth of some sort or

description — the two toiled on; now Lawrence seemed the winner, now Percy; now the scale seemed turning to this side, now it turned to that, now it stood steady; but still Percy Forbes faltered not, nor wavered till he had obtained his wealth, or that which is the object of all men's Race for Wealth, Happiness.

The object of men's Race! true; but yet, when the mad gallop is over, when all the flogging and spurring, all the anxiety and excitement have come to an end — when the firsts and seconds are declared, and the lists published and the day is done, and the furious ride a story of the past, a feat accomplished, — what about the prizes?

Dear friends, who of us has not galloped past something by the way; who has not trampled his best treasures under foot as he flew along; who has not injured himself or others in the wild race which takes away men's senses and men's breath; who, as a rule, can go back to spend his winnings in peace and comfort, satisfied that no heart has been broken, no reputation blasted, no home made desolate by his success?

At this point, some reader closes the volume, remarking that he will not proceed further; that it is against his creed to finish stories which have any melancholy in them, that there is enough sorrow in life without going to books to find more of it; and, doubtless, if the sole end and object of reading books be amusement, that dissatisfied individual is right.

And yet, dear companions — you, and you, and you — who have travelled with me along many a city street, and read to the end of story after story, judge between me and him. Can truth ever be unwhole-

some? Was this one talent, poor and simple though it may be, of telling the tale of a man's life — given simply to earn a few pounds for the author, to pass a few idle hours for the reader — to furnish an article for a magazine, to enable a critic to show how easily the hardest labour, the most toilsome work can be pulled to pieces? Was it? Are we to tell the truth, or but a part of it. Are we to speak our words or your words; are we to tell the stories of men's lives as they fell out, or as you would have wished them to fall out? Are we to be lying prophets, preaching unto you sweet words, and filling you with honey which shall turn to bitterness? Are we to declare to you, in order to be popular, that "men gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles?" Shall we relate one half the story, and leave the other half unwritten, or shall we be faithful and certify to you that, according to the seed a man sows so must he reap — that if he plant tares he shall in no wise gather in wheat?

And as it is the scattering of the corn and the springing thereof, the budding into the ear and the ripening of the grain, that make up the tale of spring and summer and autumn, so likewise in a book it is the actions of the men and the women who move through the pages, that are strewn broadcast over the story, that spring up into the blade, that are fashioned into fruit, that have to be garnered with tears or with smiles when the volume comes to be finished, the still white paper to be covered with the records of happiness or woe.

Little recked the two young men, whose story from this part is interwoven, how the story would end; how that race, undertaken [illegible] almost in jest, would come

to be an awful reality, a fearful trial to each; how as time went by the pace was destined to increase, the struggle to become fiercer, till, rivals no longer, they clasped hands in peace at last.

Yet in each there seemed a prevision that at some future day they should ride a race for no mean prize, for no small consideration — reining back, each from the other, jesting over the merits of their business steeds, talking half laughingly about their separate chances of success, speaking of it as a joke that there was to be any rivalry between them — Percy felt and Lawrence felt that some day the reins they then gathered up so carefully would be flung to the horse; that with whip and spur, with heel and hand, they would ride onward to the winning post.

Which will you bet on, reader? Percy Forbes' horse was entered for the race when his father left him eight thousand pounds. Equal weight, gentlemen riders — which is the favourite? dark hair or light? the black or the chestnut? You know their points. You may make up your books, for the bell has rung, and the race is beginning.

Not precisely on the course Mr. Percy Forbes would have selected, perhaps, had selection been left to him; but in one respect small capitalists are like beggars — they cannot always be choosers.

It had been the desire of this capitalist's heart to be taken into partnership by Mr. Sondes. He was wise enough to see that such an arrangement would ensure him fortune, and in due time position; and he accordingly took Mr. Sondes' advice, on the disposal of the thousands left after paying his creditors, with the amiable idea of giving that gentleman an oppor-

tunity of proposing a partnership, were he so minded. But Mr. Sondes was not so minded, and he omitted to avail himself of the opportunity.

He went so far indeed as to observe that if Mr. Forbes could find no better opening he might be induced to retire from the Distaff Yard concern altogether, and make some arrangement for relinquishing a portion of his interest therein to his visitor; and Mr. Perkins fell into such ecstasies over this project, and painted such landscapes of success and happiness, as made it hard for his young friend to negative the proposition.

"I have two objections to Distaff Yard, Mr. Sondes," he said, however, when Mr. Sondes seemed to expect some explanation of his refusal. "One is — I do not like the business."

"Not like the business!" repeated Mr. Sondes; "why, what fault can you find with it? — a clean, dry business, wholesale, short credits, well-established, with a first-rate character in the trade, and capable of being pushed to any extent."

"That is just it," returned Percy Forbes; "it is not a business I should like to push. No doubt, adulteration is a necessary and legitimate branch of commerce," went on the younger man, wishing to assign some reason for his objection, and yet still desirous to avoid giving offence; "but when one has a choice, do you not think one may as well choose something which has not a social brand upon it?"

"If 'one' goes in for that, 'one' must keep out of business altogether," answered Mr. Sondes, with a sneer; "for society has branded business all over with ugly names, and letters of fearful import."

"I do not care for ugly names so long as they are undeserved," replied Percy, a little hotly; "but in this case I am not sure I should feel my hands quite clean; and therefore, at the risk of appearing ungrateful, I must decline your liberal offer."

"Mr. Perkins and myself feel highly flattered by your implied compliment to our unworthy selves," remarked Mr. Sondes, speaking for self and partner.

"Neither of you will, I hope, misunderstand my meaning," persisted Percy. "I do not say, because I think a thing wrong that it is wrong; I do not even go the length of declaring that the trade is in any way objectionable; all I say is, I do not think it is one I should care to be mixed up in; and feeling that, well as I am sure Mr. Perkins and I would pull together, I fear I must refuse what you propose."

"You split hairs too cleverly for me," returned Mr. Sondes; "you think, and you do not think; you have opinions, and you have not opinions; perhaps your second objection would explain your first. Will you state it for our edification?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," replied Percy, who was resolved to take no notice of Mr. Sondes' tone. "I do not think Mr. Barbour would care to have a comparative stranger, and a much less clever man than himself, put over his head."

"You are as generous as you are modest," said Mr. Sondes. "I never meant to put you over Barbour's head, however; I intended either to give him a share in the business, as a set-off against the capital I should still have had to leave in it — the payment being a matter of arrangement between himself and me; or else to take him into a trade he is much better suited

for, and let him assist in the management of the sugar-house."

"It is a pity, sir, you did not mention that idea at the commencement," said Percy Forbes, and he could not help feeling both bitter and angry as he spoke.

"Why is it a pity?" asked Mr. Sondes, coolly.

"Because, had I entertained no other objection to your plan, I should have declined to take a share in any business in which Mr. Barbour had an equal interest with myself. We are very good friends apart, but I know we could not get on as partners."

"We are all, then, equally honoured with your good opinion," said Mr. Sondes.

"If it be an honour, you certainly all stand high in my estimation," answered Percy, quietly. "You are all cleverer, more experienced, more practical than I; and it is a matter, therefore, of keen regret to me that I shall not have the benefit of your advice and assistance in my future course."

"You turn a sentence neatly," remarked Mr. Sondes. "It is a knack, I suppose, mixing much with ladies teaches a man."

But Mr. Perkins, rising and shaking hands with Percy, said —

"Whether you come to Distaff Yard or not, Mr. Forbes, whether you put your money in with us, or take it elsewhere, I hope you will make your fortune; and any advice or assistance I can give you in a poor way, is quite at your service."

"Thank you. I feel certain of your friendship," answered Percy, gratefully. He had thought his thousands of very little value, indeed, during that interview; he had come to the conclusion wit' ort

space of time that business was not improving to the manners, nor negotiating a partnership beneficial to the temper; and he could not help looking gratefully at this man who, even in the presence of his superior, dashed so boldly to the rescue, and spoke to him words of kindness and encouragement. "I have been wrong, perhaps," he went on, "to intrude my affairs on Mr. Sondes' notice; but I really did stand in need of counsel. Mr. Alwyn offered to take me into his business, but —"

"Mr. Alwyn offered what?" interrupted Mr. Sondes, almost with a shout.

"To give me a share in his business," repeated Percy, slowly and distinctly, and at that the two partners, moved apparently by some common thought, turned and looked at each other; then, putting the papers lying on his table together, Mr. Sondes said, in a very different tone to that he had employed during the interview —

"I am glad you did come to me, very; and if I have made use of any expressions during our conversation calculated to annoy you, I beg your pardon for my irritability. Pray sit down again. You say you want advice. Mine is — do not take any rash step, but go and consult your uncle as to how you should invest your money."

"I have consulted him," answered Percy, "and he has promised to look about and make inquiries for me. While he was doing so I thought I would come to you."

"It was very kind of Mr. Alwyn," Percy continued; "he always has been very kind to me, and to most people, I daresay, it would prove a splendid

opening; but I promised myself to keep out of the way of temptation, and I could not stick to that promise if I had anything to do with the Alwyns. I am not a fellow like Barbour — I cannot combine business with pleasure. It is very weak, and very foolish, I admit; but I cannot help it. If I am to do any good, I must cut all my old acquaintances, and eschew credit and company."

"I think you ought to return to your original idea and emigrate," said Mr. Sondes, looking at the man who made the foregoing confession with a mixed expression of wonder and pity. "I am afraid you will never be able to hold to your resolution in London; and remember, a relapse is more dangerous than the original illness."

"I know it," was the reply; "who better? I have had relapse after relapse; but now I intend to mend; I have had a bitter lesson," he added, speaking in a lower tone, "and it shall not be a lost lesson, please God. Now, Mr. Sondes, I have taken up too much of your time talking about myself and my own concerns. If you should hear of anything likely to suit, will you let me know?"

But Mr. Sondes was not going to suffer his visitor to escape quite so easily; he asked him one question and another; he drew him on to speak fully of Mr. Alwyn's offer, and found it had been seriously made, and seriously declined.

"Did it not strike you as singular," said Mr. Sondes, "that Mr. Alwyn should offer so small a capitalist a share in so large a business?"

"No," was the reply; "Mr. Alwyn was always kind to me; and then it moderate slice of the

profits he offered — just enough to enable me to call myself a partner, and no more."

"And you have not repented your refusal?"

Percy laughed. "The burnt child dreads the fire," he answered, "and my burn was a very deep one."

So they talked on for a time, and then — it was in the evening all this conversation took place — Mr. Sondes so far unbent as to ask his partner and Mr. Forbes to take some coffee.

Up the broad staircase Percy walked side by side with Mr. Perkins, noticing as he went the paintings that in those days covered the walls that are now so destitute of ornament.

"It is a delicious house," he said, pausing for a moment by the window of the first landing, and looking out over the garden; "so peaceful, so unlike anything one would look for in such a neighbourhood!"

"Confound his 'one,'" thought Mr. Sondes, who regarded this mode of expression as a piece of simple affectation, but he added, aloud, "It will not be peaceful long after my lease is out, I expect; they are building all round me, and would build up to my windows, if I were disposed to let them. Some day, I suppose, we must move; quit the old place which has been left behind by the world, and follow the world elsewhere; but I am loath even to think of that necessity, for I love the house. I am like the cats, I believe, attached to its very walls."

And there came a tone into the man's voice, and a look into his face as he spoke, which surprised his visitor, who, knowing nothing of Mr. Sondes' life story, never imagined whose feet had touched the floors, whose hand had clung to walls and banisters for support, who

had come to the old house in Stepney Causeway and stopped beside its door and crossed its threshold to die — only to die.

Yet not quite only; for she left in the desolate apartments something which kept the heart of her faithful lover from turning into stone; given a purpose to his life, an object to his existence, — Olivine, who stood in the drawing-room as they entered, a child no longer, but a girl — pretty, charming, diffident, yet self-possessed as of old.

"I suppose you scarcely remember my niece?" said Mr. Sondes, by way of careless introduction.

"I am afraid I do not," answered Percy Forbes, bowing low to the girl-woman who lifted her eyes, inquiringly to his.

"I remember you," she observed, with that utter absence of consciousness or restraint, which had been one of her peculiarities in childhood. "I recollect your coming to tell uncle about Lawrence Barbour's accident," and she put out her hand with a sweet grave courtesy, and Percy Forbes took it as though she were giving him a treasure.

There was something about that girl — about her eyes, her voice, her manner — which filled Percy with a strange emotion, half-pleasant, half-painful.

And yet it was not *her* eyes, *her* voice, *her* manner, but rather an ideal of which all three were a kind of impersonation, that made him stand for a moment silent and embarrassed.

Have you ever looked at a portrait till it haunted you? Have you ever seen the painted face of one who, it may be, was an utter stranger to you, that yet seemed to fill your mind with a sort of rec-

that sent you out over the sea of speculation wondering where you had seen it before, or where you would see it again?

The eyes talk to you; the lips tell you a dreamy story. "We have been much to you," they seem to say; or, "We shall be much to you." The face grows, it becomes a haunting presence. Is it that it fulfils our imaginings by its outward beauty, or that it comes to tell us of the time when soul shall speak to soul?

Sometimes the portrait even of an intimate friend gives us knowledge about him which we never possessed before. There is a second look on every human face different from the expression we are acquainted with, and that is the expression which it wears to a stranger, and just as strangers often make guesses at character — true guesses at traits and virtues and foibles, which have escaped the observation of those most intimate one with another; so, oftentimes, the first time we glance on a new acquaintance, we read words traced on his countenance, mystic words, the full meaning of which is scarcely ever guessed till friend has walked side by side with friend through the years, almost till the end.

As he wended his way home that night Percy Forbes puzzled himself about Olivine Sondes, about her manners, her appearance, her voice.

Her face haunted him: it came between him and the gaslight; it flitted before him into his house; it turned and looked back at him from the door of his room; and then it entered the apartment and remained there.

He remembered her well enough when she told him where he had seen her before. He recalled to

himself the child who kissed him, and he thought the young girl who held out her hand to welcome him was not so different from the child as might have seemed only natural.

What would she be like when she was twenty? Would she have the same guileless expression, the same clear eyes, the same voice, the same unsophisticated manner? What would the world teach her? Or did Mr. Sondes mean to keep her for ever out of the world?

"Better so," Percy decided; "better, far better;" and then more memories came back to him, and he thought of all Miss Alwyn had said concerning the child when she was a child; and he marvelled if what Miss Alwyn had said were true. Had that young thing really wit enough to understand the rich man's daughter? If the pair were to meet now, would Olivine still prove a match for Henrietta, and be able to keep that lady in check?

And about her eyes. Should he, Percy, ever see them full of tears? As he thought that, the face before him seemed to be the face of a woman, and the eyes were heavy with weeping, and the cheeks pale with grief.

"I can't stand this at any price," thought Percy Forbes. "Plague take the girl, and her eyes too, and my foolish fancies into the bargain;" and he set himself resolutely to work to banish the phantom he had conjured up, and decided that he would go on the morrow to his solicitors and ask them if they could recommend any partnership likely to give him work and increase his worldly means.

With the morrow, however, arrived a letter f

his uncle, stating his intention of coming to town, and seeing to a "very good thing indeed," of which he had heard from his friend Mr. Hunt.

This good thing proved to be the partnership Mr. Jackson mentioned to his wife — the partnership in a great concern at Limehouse, which gave employment to hundreds of men, and was known as one of the best firms at that time extant.

Much manœuvring had Mr. Lewin to effect this grand stroke of business. He brought influence, and private friendship, and good names, and money, all to bear, and at last achieved his object. He made Percy's capital up to ten thousand pounds; he managed all the interviews; he traded largely on his nephew's story; he made honourable mention of Percy's capabilities, of his honesty and honour.

"He has been an idle dog, I admit," said the old gentleman, with a delightful candour; "but he has never had a fair chance before. He has never worked for himself, but always for others; and he got into bad hands — into the hands of people who, thinking he would never have to labour for his bread, let him do what he liked, and never told him he was going wrong. If you would let him live on the premises, and allow him — (not to take the management, for he is not fit to be a manager) — but just to see the people you employ do their duty, I think you will find your advantage at the end of a year. He is young, and he is active, and he is willing to learn, and anxious to work, and he has ten thousand pounds ready money." So Mr. Lewin rhymed on till the senior partners declared, for very peace sake, they would agree to his proposal.

"It was residing on the premises did it, Lewin,"

said old Mr. Hunt, as they crept along Tower Street together. "Not a man of any influence in the concern will live down at Limehouse; and, there is no use denying it, a partner on the spot will save the firm a round sum per annum. Now Percy's fortune is made, if he will only keep steady."

"There is no fear of him," answered Mr. Lewin. "I know the lad; he has got a stake in the game at last, and the slur taken off his own name, and the stain removed from his mother's memory. He will keep straight enough now. Who should be able to warrant him if I cannot? Did I not bring him up? and don't I know every turn about him? — and there are not many bad turns, that is one comfort."

"It is a splendid opening," said Mr. Hunt; and to this proposition Percy, when the sentence was repeated to him, agreed, as in duty bound.

He knew he should make a considerable sum a year; and yet he was scarcely satisfied. He would have preferred a smaller and a different business, with fewer partners to divide the spoil — where things were not conducted on so grand a scale, where individual push and energy could have conquered fortune.

A concern like that in Distaff Yard, had the trade there carried on been perfectly honest, would have been more to his taste. He knew that where he might draw five hundred pounds out of the profits of his own business, he might have made a thousand in partnership with such a man as Mr. Sondes; but still Percy resolved to be content. He turned to his work with a will: he furnished his house; he stocked his conservatory; he made his home due east in Limehouse, and cut the west as completely as though he had never

basked in the sunshine of wealth and luxury: he rose early, he went to bed betimes; he took life quietly and soberly, and gave the most perfect satisfaction to his senior partners.

"It must be very dull for you living down here all alone," one of them remarked to him after he had been in residence for about six months; "why don't you marry?"

"Nobody would have me," answered Percy.

"Nonsense; you do not expect me to believe such a modest story as that."

"Well then, will you believe I do not like any woman on earth well enough to think of spending my life with her," returned Mr. Forbes.

"That is a pity," replied his partner, "for I am afraid you will not see any woman down in this neighbourhood likely to induce you to change your opinion."

"I do not imagine I shall," Percy answered, and the conversation dropped.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Preparing for the Party.

There is little originality in the observation that men are not like women; that, in their virtues and vices, their talents, modes of thought, rules of action, powers of mind, greatnesses and meannesses, they are wide as the poles asunder.

The remark has been made over and over again: for anything we can tell to the contrary, Adam may have ventured to intimate as much to Eve, and the patriarchs very probably were as well aware of this

"diverseness" as those who repeat the truism (seeming to think it a new discovery) at the present day.

But for all that, most women will persist in judging of men's feelings by their own; and many men think women ought to look out over the plains of life from the male side of the hill: wherefore, as women as well as men read these pages, it is necessary once again to state a fact which people are so apt to forget, in order that ladies may understand how it came to pass there was actually no jealousy in those early days, of which I am writing, between Lawrence Barbour and Percy Forbes.

Men are not like women! If Mr. Jones start a dog-cart, with lamps complete (to borrow the advertising formula), if he purchase a high-stepping horse, and having ornamented the animal with silver-mounted harness, he adventure to drive himself to business or the station, Brown does not instantly detest his neighbour and "hope he can honestly afford it." Suppose, on the contrary, Brown makes a lucky hit, and adds a new wing to his house, or buys his wife a brougham, or takes a mansion down the North-Western line, Robinson never thinks of feeling his friend has committed the "unpardonable sin," though he may be twice as rich and prosperous as himself. Let Mrs. Jones, however, refurnish her drawing-room; let her daughter be provided by a too partial parent with one of Collard's Repetition Trichord grand pianos, on which to fight out her daily battle with Thalberg and Czerny; let Mrs. Brown engage a man-servant, or Mrs. Robinson drive out with a pair, to return the Hon. Mrs. Blank's call, and there is a row in the rookery forthwith.

The ladies, God bless them, are apt to be a little envious at times about trifles, or things which seem

trifles from a man's point of view, and it is difficult for them to understand how, so long as Mr. Jones does not interfere with Mr. Brown, so long as he does not take away his clients or meddle with his customers, the latter gentleman should be so "mean spirited" as rather to admire his "turn-out," and be glad of a lift in it when occasion serves.

There is a grand indifference about husbands, which seems wonderful in the eyes of the softer sex; they have a way of neglecting the business of their neighbours, and of attending to their own, that cannot fail to be aggravating to the female mind. If they are able to make a handsome income they do not care whether their brother-in-law be "coining" or not. Of course, there are exceptions to all rules — Haman and Mordecai, Saul and David, for instance; but these exceptions only prove the rule. Men are not like women; for which reason, when Percy Forbes left the west and took up his abode due east, when he invested his thousands and bought some substantial household gods, and shrined them in one of the sweetest spots a man need desire to inhabit — Lawrence Barbour did not retire to Mrs. Pratting's first floor disconsolate; he neither refused food nor kicked her Skye terrier, nor blew up the foreman in Distaff Yard, nor quarrelled with Mr. Sondes, nor sought a convenient excuse for weeping bitterly, nor for indulging in a fit of hysterics. He was not jealous of Percy Forbes; he did not grudge him his legacy, he did not detest him because his residence was the perfection of a dwelling, because he was a beggar no longer, but a man likely, if he stuck to business, to get on well in the world, and become in time rich.

It did not signify to Lawrence who was wealthy

or who was poor, so long as he gained money and experience. Percy Forbes was no rival of his in the only pursuit where rivalry would then have signified to Mr. Perkins' cousin. Perhaps, indeed, he rather rejoiced over Percy's good fortune, since it deprived Hereford Street of the pleasure of his frequent society. On the whole, although they were good enough friends, he did not like the man who took up his quarters near him; but his feelings on the subject were so negative, that had Mr. Forbes elected to pitch his tent next door to Mrs. Pratting's, Lawrence would only have said, "Do you find your rooms comfortable?" Had he lost his fortune, the young man might have exclaimed, "Poor devil," as he now ejaculated, "Lucky dog," feeling quite as indifferent to the news of his abasement as he did to the intelligence of his exaltation.

"The only thing about the whole business which I envy you," he remarked one day to Mr. Forbes, "is your house. If I could afford it, and that business continued, as I suppose it will for many a year, to oblige me to live in this neighbourhood, I would pay any money for such a residence. It is perfect, once you are inside the gates. Where would you find anything like it, unless, indeed, you chose to go to Fulham or cross over to Charlton? — trees and garden, lawn and river — trees that you may sit under; a lawn in which I have gathered yarrow; and then that view over the Thames! If ever I come begging and praying you to let me this place, will you do it — will you?"

"The place is not mine to let," answered Percy, who knew well enough what Lawrence was thinking about, and who knew also that Miss Alwyn would not live due east for love of any one; "but when you have

made up your mind to a rent of five or six hundred a year, I will represent your case to our firm, and tell them a young friend of mine cannot marry unless his wife have these trees to shade her, this grass to walk on, that Reach of the river to contemplate. Never fear but I will plead your cause, and, what is more, if you like, Miss Alwyn shall have a sight of her future residence —"

"I wish you would not couple her name and mine together, Forbes" interrupted Lawrence.

"Well, the beautiful princess — if you prefer that form of speech — may have a peep of her fairy palace by only saying 'Yes.' My uncle and aunt are coming to stay with me for a few weeks, and I intend to take the opportunity of giving a party. I think it would be great fun to get a tribe of incongruous people together, or, rather, representatives of all the social tribes. Etta, I believe, would come, and make herself perfectly charming. Anything for a chance; and your papa-in-law elect —"

"I asked you before not to talk as if there were any engagement between Miss Alwyn and me," said Lawrence.

"True, I forgot. That ancient king, the high priest of Mammon, one of the elect of that very respectable god, would come also; and God bless me, and God bless himself, and say he wonders for his part why people live out west at all, and declare it would have put thousands to his credit had he lived in Mincing Lane. In imagination I see him walking up and down the lawn, and patronising the Thames, one hand in his pocket — I wonder what he keeps in that pocket besides his hand — arrayed in a pair of black trousers, and

an immaculate tie. I never did see a man look worse in evening dress than your — than Mr. Alwyn, I mean. I should like to behold him discoursing to Mrs. Jackson and listening to Mrs. Perkins' gossip."

"You surely would not ask those people?" said Lawrence, aghast.

"Would not I! come and see, that is all! There would not be the slightest pleasure, and I am confident there would be no profit, in giving a swell party due east. Besides, I want to return the hospitalities of Limehouse — to give what I can in exchange for the kindness and attention I have received since I came here. It would be immense fun, Barbour, you may depend upon that."

"Should you object to my mentioning your idea to Miss Alwyn?"

"Not in the least: if you think it will expedite the coming of the happy day, talk about me, and my idea, and this house from morning till night. Remember, however, I shall expect to be asked to the wedding, and to have a piece of cake as large as a Stilton cheese."

"What a fellow you are!"

"Am not I? — a right good fellow. It is not every one who could or would introduce a lady at a single stroke to her future house and to her future acquaintances. All the parish will be talking about her; all the men will hate the wives of their bosoms and the young persons to whom they are engaged for a twelvemonth at least. They will go raving mad about Hetty; and, mercy! won't the women detest her — won't they pull her to pieces, and cut her up in bits. It is a brilliant notion, is it not? Only fancy, Henrietta

Alwyn's *début* among the Easterns! immense sensation! positively only for one night! first appearance!" and Percy's laugh rang out as he concluded, till Lawrence could have struck him for his merriment.

"You are perfectly serious about that party, I suppose," observed Lawrence, as he was taking his leave.

"Never was more serious in my life," answered Mr. Forbes; and accordingly Lawrence seized an early opportunity of mentioning the matter in Hereford Street, where the scheme was greeted with enthusiasm.

"Only think, papa!" exclaimed Henrietta; "Percy Forbes is going to give a grand entertainment, and we are all to be asked, and we are all intending to go. I shall never speak to you again if you refuse. Mr. Barbour tells me he has got the most perfect place you ever beheld — the most charming paradise imaginable; and he is going to fill it full for one night with more curiosities than Adam had round him in Eden — his uncle and aunt amongst the number."

Upon hearing which piece of news, Mr. Alwyn, who was looking somewhat paler and thinner than formerly, or as Percy Forbes declared, more care-worn and flabbier by reason of the weight of his money bags, said that he supposed,

"Forbes was making a good thing of it down there."

"I dare say he is," answered Lawrence; "but he declares himself he is not coining."

"Who is?" inquired Mr. Alwyn, drily.

"Well, I know several people who I think are," returned the young man. "There is more money made in our end of the town than anybody would credit; in little poking factories, in tumble-down rubbishing

workshops in back streets, in slums of courts, where you would wonder any man can bear to transact business — in bits of sheds, in yards no longer than this drawing-room, thousands and thousands of pounds are turned every week, and as they turn they always leave something sticking to the fingers."

"You are not doing amiss with pepper-corns and coffee-berries, I conclude," said Mr. Alwyn.

"We cannot complain; but Mr. Sondes' part of the trade is the best, after all. Now, he is coining if you like. He has taken another place close beside his old one, and he is spending money on it just as though sovereigns were to be picked up in the streets."

"He spends nothing on his house, you see," remarked Mr. Alwyn; "that is one-half the secret of how such fortunes are amassed due east. Instead of squandering money in keeping up an expensive establishment, in entertaining handsomely, in maintaining a tribe of servants as we do, the people at your end of the town only lay out ten pounds under the idea of making twenty. It is all making there, no spending; all adding thousand to thousand, and dying worth a million of money."

"For their heirs to make merry with, when they are dead and gone," finished Miss Alwyn. "What a deal of toil to compass such a result! How much better to enjoy while you can — to gather roses — to gather roses while you may!"

"It is also wise," suggested Mr. Alwyn, "to store honey for winter consumption."

"You dear old Solomon!" exclaimed his daughter; "but then is it impossible to store and enjoy it at the same time. Look at Mr. Barbour — he is storing an

still he enjoys; he shows that two opposite pursuits are not quite irreconcilable. He can devote himself to business and yet steal a few hours for pleasure too. Percy Forbes was at one time all for amusement. Now he is all for work. He will not 'put himself in the way of temptation,' as he says himself, as though any man ought to be able to be tempted; and he is getting quite brusque, and business-like and detestable."

"You must not forget, however, that he means to give a party," reminded Lawrence.

"No, I will forgive him many sins for the sake of that one virtue. Only fancy, papa, going to a party at Limehouse! I would not miss it for any consideration. Now, you must say you will take me; you must — you must — you must," and Miss Alwyn, taking up a position behind the paternal chair, imprinted a kiss on the top of her father's head; which performance seemed to afford the owner of Mallingford End less gratification than might have been expected.

His answer, however, proved satisfactory. "I have no objection," he said, "to going to the young man's house-warming; I always had a great liking for Percy Forbes, and always shall; and I hope he may do well in his new undertaking, and marry somebody with a couple of hundred thousand."

"You mercenary papa!" ejaculated Miss Alwyn; while Lawrence remarked, "he did not think Mr. Forbes had seen anyone with so large a fortune likely to suit."

"Has not Sondes a daughter growing up?" asked Mr. Alwyn. "The day we went to Grays was there not a funny child — daughter, or niece, or something? Might she not be had with good management?" And

the rich man looked hard at Lawrence, as he concluded, to see how he took this suggestion.

"She is only a child," answered the person so scrutinized.

"I should have thought she must have been a girl by this time," remarked Mr. Alwyn; while his daughter added, "And I should have thought she must be a hundred by this time, if she went on increasing in old-fashionedness as she had done. I never did see such a witch of a child — never. What has she grown up into?" she went on, addressing Lawrence. "Would she not do for mistress of the ceremonies at Percy's *fête*?"

"I believe he scarcely knows her," Lawrence made reply, growing red, he could not have told wherefore, as he spoke. "Mr. Sondes does not encourage visitors, and he keeps Olivine shut up just as though she were in a nunnery."

"You are privileged to see the young novice, though, we may conclude," observed Mr. Alwyn.

"Yes, I often see her," answered Lawrence. "I have to go to Stepney Causeway very frequently in the evenings, and sometimes have a cup of coffee in the drawing-room. She is exactly what she always was," he continued, turning towards Miss Alwyn. "I do not think she has changed in the least."

"Is he going to keep her mewed up there for ever?" asked Mr. Alwyn.

"Not feeling in the least degree interested in the subject, I have never asked him," Lawrence replied. "I do not think, however, he would allow her to go to Mr. Forbes'. He is very particular, and —"

"Mr. Forbes is not the husband he would select for his niece," finished Miss Henrietta.

"No; I did not mean that," said the young man. "Only there will probably be a number of strange people invited — people I know Mr. Sondes would never suffer her to associate with."

"Do you hear, papa? there are to be all sorts of people there, and I am going," cried out Henrietta.

"I hear, my dear," said Mr. Alwyn.

"But you are not living among them," explained Lawrence. "It is one thing spending an evening, and another passing your life. I am sure I cannot imagine whom Olivine Sondes will marry," he went on, feeling Miss Alwyn expected him to continue speaking of the girl. "Her uncle would not think anything good enough for her, I fancy."

"I should like to see that child again," observed Henrietta. "Do persuade her to go. I am dying to have another peep at her," and Miss Alwyn mentally decided that if she did get another peep she would extinguish the girl who had years ago been so audacious as to ignore Miss Alwyn's claims to beauty.

"Ah! she would know better now," decided the West End belle; and she fell into a reverie as to what she should wear, and wherewithal she should clothe herself, from which she was only roused by the arrival of a note from Percy Forbes, requesting the pleasure of her company, and that of her father, and that of Mrs. Warman, at a very quiet evening party, to be held at Reach House on the 24th inst.

"What a most extraordinary way Percy has of wording a note," remarked Miss Alwyn, handing over the epistle for her father's perusal. "Might not any-

one judge from that, he wanted us to go down for tea and muffins and a walk in the garden?"

"It will be rather a crowded walk," said Lawrence, "if one half of the people he means to ask, accept."

"To be sure they will accept," answered Mr. Alwyn. "Ask people to Brompton or Bayswater, and they are, ten to one, engaged: they know all about the West; they know the halls, the staircases, the dining-rooms, the waiters, the hosts and hostesses, the sort of supper there will be, the quality of wine; but issue invitations from some out-of-the-way place, like Addle Lane, or the Isle of Dogs, and not a soul refuses. The most successful party at which I ever chanced to be present was one given by Mitchell, Graft and Mitchell, in their great warehouse in Norton Folgate. It was a whim of Mrs. Graft's; and when she issued her cards, everybody said, 'Where on earth is Norton Folgate?' and so the matter got talked about, and the gentlemen said it was where Mitchell's gold mine had been found, and that an entertainment there would be something worth going to. I never was at a more splendid affair. I never saw, anywhere, such lines and lines of carriages. I think some of the people had to wait hours till their turn came. You may depend upon it, Percy will scarcely receive a refusal."

"He shall not from us, at any rate," said Miss Alwyn; and that which Miss Alwyn said may be taken as the answer of most of Mr. Forbes' acquaintances.

So many people accepted, that, what at first

been proposed half as a jest, became a serious undertaking.

"And oh, Lor! my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Jackson to Mrs. Perkins, "I am given to understand that it is going to be the splendidest affair possible. There is to be a tent put up, and dancing on the green, and such a supper! and Mr. Monteith, and the rest of the partners, and their ladies are all a-coming, and they are going to bring their own servant-men, all in full livery; and, deary me! it will be a'most too grand for plain folks like us, I was a-saying to Samuel last night, but he says, 'If her most gracious Majesty was to ask me to step up to Buckingham Palace some evening, I could take my tumbler just as comfortably there, I have no doubt, in the state drawing-room, as I could in this here parlour.'"

"'You'll have to dress, Samuel,' says I to him. 'Dress!' he answers, 'did ye think I intended to go naked?' Oh mercy! how I did laugh at him; and then I made him go to his tailor, which is Mr. Owens, in the Mile End Road, and ask him what he ought to wear. So he is going to have a swallow tail and a black silk velvet waistcoat, and a white tie."

At this Ada, who was in the room, and whom the years had developed into a great girl, with a profusion of West India sugar-coloured curls, and the most intolerable manners conceivable, broke out into a perfect shriek of laughter.

"He will only want a black stick in his hand then," she said, "and everybody will take him for an undertaker;" which speech so hurt Mrs. Jackson's feelings, or, as she pronounced the word, "feelins;" that she rose to go, intimating at the same time, that if she were

Miss Ada's mamma, she would "learn her better than to make fun of a man who might be her grandfather, and who could buy and sell her par over and over again any day at Garraway's."

This reminder of Mrs. Jackson's social superiority induced Mrs. Perkins to tell Ada she wondered she was not ashamed of herself, and to tender such an elaborate apology to her visitor that the soap-boiler's wife consented to be mollified and, resuming her seat, stayed for tea, over which refreshing meal she discussed her own probable costume, and that of Sophia, her husband's daughter by a former marriage, who was a wife, "and yet, if you can understand it," as Mrs. Jackson was in the habit of explaining to strangers, "not a wife; for Mr. Jennings, as she married, deserted and left her with one child; and so we have had her and her boy these fifteen years to feed, and clothe, and educate, and never a word of my gentleman; who, I'll venture to say, has got another wife, wherever he may be."

There were ill-natured people who asserted that Mr. Jennings had reason for his flight, inasmuch as he had borne Sophia Anne's morning, and evening, and mid-day lectures till his patience was exhausted. Sophia Anne had a vague idea that by reason of lapse of time she could marry again, if a suitable husband presented himself; but Mrs. Jackson had doubts on this point; and spite of the expense of her food and clothing threw cold water on her step-daughter's thoughts of choosing a second spouse.

"I should have considered one experiment enough, without thinking of another, I should," exclaimed Mrs. Jackson; whereupon Sophia Anne remarked,

threw an indescribable loveliness over the fancies, and the visions of the past.

We are told that the good which is worked for, seems better in men's eyes than the good which knocks at their door unsolicited and unexpected; but this is an assertion open surely to grave doubt. Rather, on the contrary, does not work take away to a great extent from the capability of enjoyment, from the power of full and perfect appreciation? Does the cook eat with appetite of the dinner her own hands have prepared? does the fisherman care for the turbot and salmon he himself has captured? does the sailor, who has been out to the Spice Islands, feel any interest in the cargo he has assisted to bring home? the painter, who has laid colour on colour? the author who has toiled on page after page? the merchant, who has entered transaction after transaction in his ledger? the barrister, who has pleaded the cause of client after client? — do these people each and severally attach the same value to the works of their heads and hands as the outsider? Does it ever seem to the successful man as fine a thing to have achieved success, as it does to his unfortunate next-door neighbour, who has failed in compassing the same object?

In effect success is but the rainbow of existence, which when men touch they find merely a shadow, colourless and unlovely; never a thing of all brightness does it appear, save when seen through a mist of fancy. Very beautiful seems the arch in the firmament of the future to the lad starting on his walk through life; but when the morning dews glitter no longer on the grass, when the sun of reality has dried up all the moisture and softness out of the early air, man sees the rainbow

of the past no longer; there are the blue heavens, and the green earth, but the arch up which his soul once climbed away from earth to heaven gladdens his sight never more for ever!

For this reason, if the measure of worldly prosperity that had fallen to his lot failed completely to satisfy Lawrence Barbour, who, looking into his own heart, into the hopes and the dreams with which it was once full to overflowing, may find fault with the young man?

He had nursed his fancies, he had erected his fairy palaces, he had lived his imaginary life, and behold, the reality of his success, though beyond his actual expectations, did not bring with it the happiness he once thought, theoretically, success could not fail to accomplish.

"Every existence is prosaic," he decided as he walked along; and who indeed, traversing that dreary Commercial Road could have arrived at any other conclusion? "Why should I be discontented? why should I long to kick over the chair on which I am standing? why should I allow the thought of pleasure to interfere with business, and hate so much the bridge which is carrying me across to pleasure and ease and competence, as to desire to break it down even while I am walking over it? I wonder if I were once married whether work would seem less irksome, whether the two lives would be any easier to combine than has been the case of late; I wonder —" and he wound his way in and out among the people, and thought, as he turned his steps in the direction of Goodman's Fields.

He was but a lad when he first entered London, when you, dear reader, in the opening chapter of this

book made his acquaintance; but the years have passed since that, and he is now a man in appearance, feelings, hopes, memories, purposes.

A clever man too, as Mr. Perkins is ready to testify — clever, ingenious, hardworking, quick at jumping to a conclusion, resolute in carrying out his intentions. The same temper which induced him to come to London enabled him to succeed in London. He never turned his back on difficulty, he never suffered any obstacle to daunt his spirit. His hours of labour had been many; his moments of recreation few; at Distaff Yard, in Goodman's Fields, in his own lodgings Lawrence Barbour was essentially a worker with all his wits about him, and his "seven senses," so Mrs. Perkins admiringly declared, to boot.

"There is not a wink on him," she affirmed one day to Percy Forbes; and although that gentleman decided her conclusion might have been couched in a more elegant form, still he felt inclined to believe it could scarcely have been conveyed in one more terse or strictly accurate.

The man who walked up the Commercial Road a few days after Mr. Forbes' invitations were issued had indeed both eyes wide open to his own interest, to his own advancement, to his own ultimate success; and no person in London was, perhaps, more keenly alive to a knowledge of this fact than Mr. Josiah Perkins, who was wont to look after his relative, and wonder where he got his business capabilities, his keen, cool, calculating head.

"It is not as if he had been reared to it," Mr. Perkins remarked on one occasion to Mr. Sondes. "It is not as if he had been buying and selling and bar-

gaining and humbugging all his life. He has only been four years in the business, and I'll be hanged if sometimes I don't think that he could buy and sell me."

"He is working for love of Miss Alwyn," returned Mr. Sondes, "and love is a great incentive to both invention and labour."

"The business talent was in him from the first," Mr. Perkins insisted.

"I think it was," answered Mr. Sondes; "at least it was under that idea I took to him. He is a very useful fellow, Perkins; and if it were not for that Alwyn affair we might do well for him. As it is——"

"When he marries Miss Alwyn, what course do you mean to adopt with regard to his position in the — the concern?" asked Mr. Perkins desperately.

"I think it is very probable he will never marry Miss Alwyn," said Mr. Sondes, quietly looking straight in his partner's face as he spoke.

"Not money enough?" suggested Mr. Perkins.

"On either side," returned Mr. Sondes, and his partner indulged in a subdued whistle.

"It has occurred to me lately," Mr. Perkins said after a short pause, with his hands plunged deep in the pockets of his office coat, and his eyes wandering hither and thither apparently in mortal fear of meeting Mr. Sondes' glance, "that Barbour wants to be taken into the business."

"I know he does," replied the senior partner; "but he won't be."

"I thought you told Mr. Forbes that you had some idea of giving him a share."

"In Distaff Yard," answered Mr. Sondes; "but it is not a share in the chemical factory your relative desires. It is the sugar-house he has his eye on;" and Mr. Sondes, leaning up against Mr. Perkins' desk, laughed to himself softly, and added, "If he were my partner he could propose to Miss Alwyn, and if he were my partner he might stand a chance of being accepted; but I am not going to be such an idiot as all that comes to, clever though your relative may be, Mr. Perkins."

"It is not my fault that he is clever, or that he tries to fly too high," said the chemist deprecatingly.

"I never thought it was," answered Mr. Sondes, and the conversation terminated.

It was about a week after this that Lawrence Barbour walked up the Commercial Road, and turned into Goodman's Fields, and soon found himself at Mr. Sondes' Refinery, the outside of which he surveyed with a sort of leisurely speculation from the time he came in sight of it, till he passed through the gates and entered the building.

Not for worlds, reader, supposing you were with me at this moment in the flesh instead of merely in the spirit, would I ask you to cross the threshold of that place with him. It is one thing to visit a sugar-house in imagination, and quite another to climb in the body from story to story. It may not be altogether disagreeable, sitting in a pleasant drawing-room surrounded by every comfort, with open windows admitting the pure sweet air, with flowers on the table, and a blazing fire on the hearth, to read how money is made due east, but an actual visit to one of those

dismal "diggings" beyond the Tower would prove too much for the sensitive nerves of those individuals whose way in the world has been made for them, who have never had to take the rough and the smooth, the good and the bad of business; nor been compelled to turn their steps day after day to the factories and the warehouses, to the shops and the foundries where money is earned hardly, to the end that it may be spent in far different scenes, lavishly.

A huge building of eight stories in height, covering a large surface of ground — dilapidated-looking, black, grimy, gloomy — with a long expanse of dead wall turned towards the street — that was Mr. Sondes' sugar-house externally, while internally, words would fail to convey even a faint idea of the apparent misery and discomfort of its arrangements.

The first time Lawrence Barbour reached the third story, whither he persisted in mounting contrary to Mr. Sondes' advice shortly after his return from Grays, he had to be carried down again by a pair of half-naked Germans, who laid him flat on his back on the pavement of the yard, and threw water on him till he recovered consciousness. Nothing daunted by the result of this experiment, the youth made trial after trial, till at last, as he said, the smell of the "spice" affected him no more than if it had been eau-de-cologne, and he minded the heat as little as the spice.

"How I should like to go over a sugar-house," observed Miss Alwyn to him one day, some months after he had become acclimatised.

"You would never come out of it alive," he answered; "and you would not touch sugar again for a twelvemonth."

"But you take sugar," she suggested.

"True; but then I am not you; besides, I know the process now sufficiently well to appreciate its cleanliness — in one visit you could only appreciate its dirt. Happy is the man who either understands all about what he eats and drinks, or nothing; whose eyes are either fully opened, or who is able to keep them shut close. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing even at dinner. I often think about what Mr. Forbes said after I took him over our factory in Distaff Yard, — 'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.'"

"I remember his quoting something like that to me," replied Miss Alwyn; "indeed he has been a perfect pest since he knew you. Cayenne, he says, is not cayenne, nor coffee coffee; he declares there is no tea in London, and that he believes the very eggs are adulterated. Papa had a present made to him of some very fine mustard, which he felt certain was genuine; but Percy procured a little packet from Mr. Perkins, I think, of the pure and simple, and papa's mouth was blistered for a week afterwards. I never was so sorry about anything as your taking him over your place. He seems to have devoted himself to the subject ever since, and can tell me how every morsel of food one touches is manufactured, and how each article that is used to adulterate another article, is adulterated itself in its turn."

"I do not think he can," laughed Lawrence.

"Why, he told me that you initiated him into all the mysteries of your business," she remarked.

"He thought I did, which afforded him quite as much amusement," answered the young man; "it would

hardly have pleased my employers had I made a confidant of him about their private concerns."

"Oh, you hypocrite!" exclaimed Miss Alwyn, shaking her head at him as though perfectly scandalised; "and I suppose you do the same thing with me, and when I ask you for information feed me with falsehoods instead of with valuable truths."

"No, I either answer you truly or not at all."

"In reality?"

"Try me," he replied. And thus invited, Miss Alwyn at once returned to her original charge, and inquired concerning the domestic economy of a sugar-house.

"Was it actually a horrid place, and so frightfully warm, and did they really use blood to make loaf-sugar, and was not the idea very nasty?"

"It is not very nice," Lawrence returned.

"When we were children — that is, my cousin Alice, and her brother Jack, and myself — we amused ourselves in the nursery by burning sugar in the candle, and Jack said that the coloured drops we saw in the flame were the blood. He used to make me so sick," and Miss Alwyn laid down her embroidery, and looked up pathetically at Lawrence, who occasionally felt a little jealous of cousin Jack, and disposed to do battle with him.

"He was talking folly," said Mr. Barbour, not sorry to prove himself better informed even on a business question than Mr. John Alwyn. "The 'spice' does not remain in the sugar; if it did, the loaf could never be pure and white, as is the case."

"Then it really is clean?"

"To be sure it is; though, if you were to go over

a sugar-house, you might, as I said at first, be inclined to doubt the fact. That is the reason why it is better to know nothing or to know all. White of eggs would purify sugar just as well as spice, if we could only get enough of it. I tried adulterating eggs for the sake of the albumen, but found it would not pay. Mr. Perkins said it could not be done, so I thought I would try, and I did it."

"You clever creature, what did you do?"

"I took the white and yolk out of an egg, and filled the shell with water, and no person could have told the egg had been tampered with — not even the hen that laid it," he said, a little boastfully.

"How could you manage it?"

"Simply enough," he replied. But still he did not tell her how.

"That is no answer," she pouted. "I want to know the *modus operandi*, and it is not kind of you to refuse to gratify my curiosity."

"You would not understand the process if I tried to explain it to you," Lawrence answered. And then Miss Alwyn got absolutely angry. Did he think she was a perfect simpleton? Because she happened, unfortunately for herself, to be a woman, did he think her incapable of comprehending the simplest experiment? How could men expect women to be clever, if they refused to tell them such a trifling thing as that? At all of which Lawrence only laughed, and held to his point. He would not deceive her with any fibs; but he would not confide to her any secrets.

Those were very early days, however. Before many years went by, Miss Alwyn could get what information she desired out of Lawrence Barbour; and it was for-

tunate, perhaps, for him that she did not desire to know very much concerning his business or that of his employers, or else he might have found himself some day with a month's salary in his pocket, wandering home to his lodgings, and wondering where he was to go to, and what he was to do next.

As it was, he was far too unreserved in his conversations with the fascinating family in Hereford Street. At the first Samson deluded Delilah; but in the long run Delilah deluded Samson. It is always the way;—let a man be ever so cautious at the beginning, let him swear to himself ever so resolutely, thus far will I love and trust this woman, and no further, the end has usually a terrible uniformity about it. Delilah worms his secret out of him at last, and it is not till he finds himself bound and a prisoner, that he understands her tactics, and curses the day in which he was beguiled into trusting one so fair and one so false.

Mr. Sondes was just the man to visit such indiscretions with the heaviest punishment his ingenuity could devise. To him the unpardonable sin was gossip between office and home. Had he been an inquisitor he would have rewarded with thumb-screw and rack the unfortunate culprit who told the wife of his bosom how much sugar he refined in a week, or by what improved process the refining was effected; and having long suspected that the Alwyns were in possession of more of the details of his business than he at all approved, and being, moreover, sorely annoyed by the Alwyn intimacy altogether, he seized on the first tangible ground of complaint that offered itself, and told one of the men to desire Mr. Barbour, before he

left, to come into the counting-house, as he, Mr. Sondes, desired to speak with him.

Lawrence had made up his mind as he walked along the Commercial Road to open the question of a partnership that very day, by asking for an increase of salary; and accordingly, when he received Mr. Sondes' message, he was standing on one of the floors, upon a carpet of sugar about an inch thick, wiping the perspiration from his face, and considering in what manner it would be best to preface his request.

"You are not to leave without seeing Mr. Sondes, sir," said one of the few Englishmen employed on the premises; "he wants to speak to you particular."

"That is lucky," returned Lawrence, "for I want to speak to him." There was something in the tone of the message which ruffled his temper.

"You are about the only person then who has wanted to speak to him this afternoon," answered the man significantly.

"Why; is he —?" asked Lawrence, eagerly.

"As two sticks," was the reply. "I thought perhaps you would like to know," continued the man, who was a sort of time-keeper and confidential servant, "for he has been like a bear with a sore head ever since he came in."

"Do you know what it is about?" inquired Lawrence.

"No; but I think you are going to catch it for something; and forewarned, forearmed, you know, sir," he added, dexterously catching the shilling Lawrence threw him, as he turned and descended into the presence chamber.

He entered the counting-house, and bade his em-

ployer good afternoon; while he did so, he saw there was a storm brewing, and for the first time since his arrival in London felt he was only a servant in Mr. Sondes' employ.

"Shut the door," said that gentleman; and Lawrence obeyed.

"I have sent for you, Barbour," he began, "to tell you that, although it is perfectly immaterial to me where you spend your evenings, or with whom you are in love, or to what friend you choose to confide the hopes and sorrows of your own life, I have a decided objection to my affairs being canvassed by your acquaintances. You are here in a position of trust, and if you go gossiping up in Hereford Street about our affairs, why the sooner you look out for another situation the better."

"Will you tell me what I have done, sir?" said Lawrence; "it is hardly fair to condemn a man without first giving him an opportunity of answering your accusation."

"It is not," returned Mr. Sondes. "My accusation is that, being in love with Miss Alwyn, you forget I am not in love with her also, and that you talk about my affairs and the affairs of our works in Distaff Yard too freely, both to the young lady and her father. You told him I was building a new sugar-house, that I was coining, and so forth. Now the one fault I hate in a man is a loose tongue; and unless you put a bridle in your mouth you will not suit either me or my partner."

"Very well, sir," answered Lawrence; "am I to go now, or take the usual notice. I did not think there was any crime in saying what every man about the place knows, that you were going to enlarge the pre-

mises, and that business was good; but if you think I have done wrong, I am content to go. I do not believe, however, you will find another who will serve you as faithfully as I have tried to do."

And Lawrence turned away choking. Any strong excitement, since his accident, always produced this feeling, and he tried to reach the door and the open air before it proved too much for him. He had dreamed of a partnership, and behold! instead thereof, dismissal. He had thought himself necessary to the concern, and he was told he had better leave it. He held his situation by so insecure a tenure that a chance sentence lightly uttered had imperilled his position. "I have worked hard," were his last words, ere he dropped into the nearest chair gasping for breath.

"What a confounded fool you must be, Barbour," said Mr. Sondes, throwing open the door and flinging up the window. "I am not going to cast you adrift for one indiscretion, only be careful for the future. Don't stand staring there," he shouted to some of the workmen, "but go and get some brandy, and be quick about it, and one of you fetch a cab. You will find some day," he went on, "that what I said to you at Grays will come true, and that you will wish you had never set eyes on the girl or her father either. But there, I have done; keep your mouth shut about my affairs, and you may court Jezebel, and wed her too if you like. Now, what will you do? go to your lodgings, or come back to dinner with me? I want to talk to you quietly; if I have been hasty, I am sorry for it; but Alwyn put me out to-day. What the deuce business is it of his whether I am doing any trade or none? Are you all right again? Take a little more

of the brandy; that is better. Get in. Stepney Causeway," Mr. Sondes added, speaking to the cabman, who drove up Great Alie Street, and thence along the Commercial Road to the old house with the wide staircase and the painted walls, and the old fashioned chimney-pieces and the pleasant home-like rooms!

CHAPTER XXV.

Disappointed.

DINNER was over, the cloth drawn, the summer fruits were placed upon the table, Olivine had left the room, and the wine stood before Mr. Sondes. Then that gentleman turned to Lawrence Barbour, and opened the conversation by asking his guest how he felt.

"Are you better?" he said. "Are you often subject to such attacks?"

"Sometimes," Lawrence answered vaguely. Like all young men, who are young men, and not old women, he hated talking about his own ailments, and was not inclined to be communicative on the subject of his health.

"You work too hard," remarked Mr. Sondes; to which observation Lawrence replied not with the usual stereotyped phrase about "working and rusting," but in words more directly to the point.

"I am glad you think so," he said, "for I have often been afraid you might not consider I did enough. It is hard though," he went on speaking more rapidly, "for a person to do his duty between two places; always when I am in Distaff Yard I feel I ought to

at the Refinery, and when I am at the Refinery I feel I ought to be in Distaff Yard."

"Rather an uncomfortable sensation, I should imagine," observed Mr. Sondes, refilling his own glass, and passing the decanter on towards his guest.

"I am positive I could satisfy you and myself better if my time were not so constantly cut up," continued Lawrence; "if I were able to devote my mind to one business exclusively."

"Very well," agreed Mr. Sondes, "devote your time and energies wholly and entirely to Distaff Yard; you have made many pretty experiments lately, Mr. Perkins tells me, and have suggested and carried out some desirable improvements in the process of manufacture," and as he concluded this speech, Mr. Sondes helped himself to a peach, and became at once absorbed in its preparation. Never a peach was more slowly dissected, more deliberately eaten; but during the whole time thus occupied, Lawrence remained resolutely silent.

He was trying to swallow his mortification. Twice within a few hours Mr. Sondes had thrown him back, twice he had come up to the charge, and twice he had been repulsed. The partnership he had felt so confident of at noon seemed now as hopelessly gone from him as yesterday. Suddenly it occurred to him that as Mr. Sondes had done without him in past years, so he could do without him in the future years; and not Mr. Sondes merely, but every person; he was only one in the world after all, and what was one more or less among the millions?

The same feeling which had come to damp his sanguine expectation the first day he set foot in London, which had thrown a shadow for a moment over his

heart, oppressed him once more. The man who sets out on foot to seek his fortune must not expect fine weather all the way; the rain pours down, and the snow beats upon his head, and the wind forces him back, and the cutting hailstones pelt in his face — it is not all sunshine, it is not all light. There come very dark hours to the mind as well as to the body of the struggler after wealth; and one of those dark hours was on Lawrence Barbour while he sat biting back his disappointment, drinking fennel with his wine, and dipping his fruit in mental vinegar.

There is nothing so bitter to any one as the sudden conviction that he is not immediately necessary to the scheme of creation; that if it pleased the Almighty to take him out of the world, the world would not miss him in the least. And an idea of this kind was doubly bitter to Lawrence, who had always hitherto considered himself rather one of the earth's props than otherwise.

Humility sitting on the ground does not receive any great shock when she is forced to lick the dust; but the height from which pride has usually to fall makes the fall painful, and Lawrence felt the jar in every nerve of his body.

He tried to answer Mr. Sondes; his very pride made him desire to say something in reply to his employer's observation, but he felt he could not say that something coolly and unconcernedly, and for this reason he held his peace.

He ate his fruit and he drank his wine in silence, till at last Mr. Sondes looked up suddenly and inquired:

"Will that arrangement suit you?"

"Perfectly, sir, if it be agreeable to you," answered Lawrence, and there ensued another silence.

Then Mr. Sondes pushed his plate from before him, and crossing his arms upon the table, said:

"We will be frank with one another, Barbour, if you please. You are not saying exactly what you think to me; I am not saying all I mean to you. A little explanation now may save us both a great deal of trouble hereafter. You are dissatisfied about something; you have been dissatisfied for a considerable time past."

"I have made no complaint," said Lawrence.

"Not in words," replied Mr. Sondes, "and neither have I, till to-day; but yet I too have not felt perfectly satisfied, and it is because neither of us is satisfied, that I say we had better come to some understanding on the subject of our mutual discontent."

"Would it not be better for us to part?" asked the younger man, who felt he could not bear to have the state of his mind inquired about and probed into by the cool collected individual who sat staring straight at him. "I am perfectly willing to accept what you said to me to-day as sufficient notice, and to confess that I did wrong in mentioning anything about your trade, good or bad, to Mr. Alwyn. Thanks to you and Mr. Perkins, I know more now than I did when I came to London, and it is not impossible I may soon obtain another situation."

"Perhaps you have another in view," suggested Mr. Sondes.

"No, I never thought of leaving your employment till you broached the matter to-day — never."

"No, and you never thought of remaining on with us as a clerk," finished Mr. Sondes.

"You first assume my thoughts, and then condemn me for your own ideas," answered Lawrence, who was now fairly at bay.

"Am I wrong in my conjecture?" demanded his tormentor, with the utmost calmness.

"I will neither admit nor deny anything," replied the younger man; "you are taking an unfair advantage of me in every way. If I am guilty in any respect, dismiss me. If I am not guilty, dismiss me still, if you think proper: but do not try to cross-question and trap me. What I have thought or felt, or expected, is my own concern, and no business of any person on earth, except myself."

"I think you are in error there," returned Mr. Sondes. "However, let that pass. I wish you well, and am sorry for your disappointment; but if you stay on with us, it is necessary we should understand each other perfectly; therefore, I intend to tell you what I mean, so that there may be no misconception in future about the matter. I do not intend to take any one into partnership at present; and if I did it certainly would not be a mere youth like yourself, over head and ears in love with a pair of bright eyes, and a pleasant winning manner."

Lawrence did not care now whether Mr. Sondes dismissed him or not. His blood was up, and it did not matter to him whether the man were peer or peasant of whom he inquired: — .

"Would it not have been as well, sir, to have waited till you were asked before you refused my request?"

"No," answered Mr. Sondes, quietly; the more angry Lawrence grew, the calmer he. "I am somewhat in the position of a young lady with a devoted lover who yet hesitates about proposing, and thereby compels her to take the initiative. Besides," continued the speaker, "if you have not spoken, other people have. Mr. Alwyn to-day was sounding me as to my intentions concerning you, and I told him plainly that I did not feel inclined to act a father's part by the son of any other man, and that I had not the slightest purpose of giving you a share in my business, either now or at any future time."

"I hope," said Lawrence, "you do not think Mr. Alwyn spoke to you on the subject with my consent; I should like you to be satisfied that I have never directly nor indirectly stated to anyone I expected or deserved more at your hands than my salary."

"I perfectly believe you," replied Mr. Sondes; "and because I believe you, and because I have now told you what I intend *not* to do, I am going to tell you what I will do, viz., double your salary, always providing, remember — always providing there is no more chattering between Limehouse and Hereford Street."

"Thank you, sir." For the life of him Lawrence could say nothing more, — three hundred a year! — six thousand shillings! not a pound a day! — he who had dreamed but a few hours before of boundless wealth — whose expectations had seemed realities, whose prophetic visions had appeared to be on the very eve of fulfilment.

And how on that was he ever to marry? How could he ever summon up sufficient assurance to go and ask

Henrietta of her father? — he with no fortune, with no certainties, with no hopes, save three hundred a year, and what he could make by suggesting improvements. And would not that three hundred a year be considered a set-off against any new processes he might discover? Would he not have to give his brains as well as his body for that mere pittance? He could remember the time when such a salary would have seemed affluence; but he had grown older, if not wiser since those days, and he was labouring now for another beside himself.

"I am sorry not to be able to do better for you," said Mr. Sondes, after a pause. "It is a matter of much regret to me that you should have prepared such a disappointment for yourself."

"I am not disappointed," Lawrence answered; "at least," he added, correcting his sentence, "I ought not to be disappointed, and yet — and yet —"

"Go on," said Mr. Sondes; "forget I am your employer. Speak to me as you might to a friend;" and he uttered this gently, for there had come into Lawrence's voice a tone of despondency which might have softened steel. "What were you thinking? what were you going to say?"

"I was going to say, How long?" answered Lawrence, desperately. "Mr. Sondes, I will forget you are my master, and speak to you as man to man. Till to-day I did hope, vaguely, that I might make myself necessary to you: so useful that perhaps a small share in the business would be given to me. You know how I have worked; you know, too, why I have worked; and now, though you offer to double my salary, though I know you have proposed to give me every

sixpence I am really worth, still I feel I may just as well sit down for the future with my hands folded, for a duchess would be as likely to marry me, as Mr. Alwyn to give his daughter to a clerk on a salary of three hundred a year."

"Then you really do want to make her your wife?"

"Assuredly."

"Why do you not propose to her?"

"What! A beggar as I am."

"Mr. Alwyn is rich. Can he not afford to gratify his only daughter's whim?"

"And should you recommend any man to be dependent on his wife?"

"Perhaps not; but I think I should recommend a man to be quite sure of the nature of the affection his ladye love and his ladye love's family entertained for him."

"Surely," began Lawrence; but Mr. Sondes interrupted him and went on:

"I may as well say precisely what I think — which is, that Mr. Alwyn's wealth has been greatly exaggerated. I think Miss Alwyn might have married over and over again, and would have married too, had her actual fortune been satisfactory. I think at this moment Mr. Alwyn is grievously embarrassed. I think he is even more embarrassed than he was when he offered for the sake of a few thousand pounds in ready money to take Percy Forbes into partnership."

"Percy Forbes into partnership!" repeated Lawrence, incredulously.

"It was that first excited my suspicions as to the state of Mr. Alwyn's affairs," said Mr. Sondes. "I felt sure Mr. Forbes was not a man Mr. Alwyn would care to have in his business unless even so small a sum of money were an object; and now what I think is this, Barbour, that had you any interest in my trade — supposing, for a moment, I were so mad as to dream of giving you an interest — Mr. Alwyn would ruin us all. He would make use of me through you. Do you understand?"

"I confess I do not," answered Lawrence.

"There are many ways of backing up a failing credit — many ways of keeping properties together, of satisfying duns, of meeting liabilities, and —"

"Will you think me impertinent if I say that unless you have proof of any embarrassment in Mr. Alwyn's affairs, you have scarcely a right —"

"To warn you off dangerous ground — is that it? Well, now I have warned you; so take my advice or leave it, as you think best; only, were I in your shoes, I should either settle the matter definitively with Miss Alwyn, or cut Hereford Street altogether."

"I cannot ask her to marry me on three hundred a year."

"Then make up your mind to forget her!" But Lawrence shook his head.

"You will neither, in fact, go into the candle nor stay away from it," remarked Mr. Sondes; "neither be on with Miss Alwyn nor off with her; neither test her attachment for you, nor try to conquer your own. Some day, perhaps, you will wish you had taken my advice, and cut that connection; but each man must

make his own bed, and lie in it after he has made it, which last is the worst part of the business oftentimes — far the worst."

There ensued a silence, during the continuance whereof Lawrence absently turned over the pieces of pear he had left on his plate. At last he said:

"I believe you have done Mr. Alwyn great injustice to day, and I know you are wrong about Miss Alwyn; but still I cannot do what you advise. I cannot even seem to go fortune-hunting."

"Right," remarked Mr. Sondes, and at the moment he wished to heaven he could transfer Lawrence's affections from Henrietta to Olivine. "Nevertheless, you might explain to Miss Alwyn at once the hopelessness of your position and of your passion, and separate yourself from her. If you do not do this, separate yourself either with or without an explanation. Some day Miss Alwyn will accept another suitor, and —"

"Mr. Sondes, I really will not sit and listen to such assertions."

"Then the girl is fond of you?" said Mr. Sondes, coolly. "All the more reason for your leaving her — all the more reason for your following Mr. Forbes' sensible lead, and cutting the West-End, and settling down to business due East."

"I wish Percy Forbes was at the devil," broke out Lawrence, angrily; "he is cast up at me continually. 'If *you* could only meet with such a thing,' Mr. Alwyn says — and so on — and so on — a man who, twelve months ago, was the very poorest fellow I ever met. I am sick to death of him, and as for his party,

I never was so weary of hearing of anything in my life."

"Then you had better not go up-stairs, for Olivine can talk of nothing else," said Mr. Sondes.

"You are surely not going to allow her to go?" exclaimed Lawrence, in amazement.

"And why not? Why should she not go with me? Do you suppose I mean to shut her out from all innocent amusements? — do you think I intend her to pass the entire of her life in Stepney Causeway?"

"No," the young man answered. "I did not know — that is, I am not certain — that is, I believe — I never thought you would care for her to be mixed up among such a lot of people. I thought Miss Sondes herself —"

"Well, you can discuss what you thought with Miss Sondes," said Mr. Sondes, rising from table. "Meantime, what is of much more importance to you, consider my advice; be either off or on with Miss Alwyn. She is coming to this party, is she not?"

"Yes; but what then?"

"Nothing; I only wanted to know. She is handsome as ever, I suppose?"

"I suppose so," Lawrence answered; and the two passed out into the hall together.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Dress.

STILL, as of old, Olivine and her uncle kept solitary house in Stepney Causeway.

Mr. Sondes had tried taking a place in the country and keeping his niece there in company with a staid governess; but the pair broke their hearts for one another, and so the child was brought back to her London home. The staid governess proving a restraint, young ones were procured, who had lovers and visitors, aims, objects, wishes, hopes, purposes, plans and futures of their own; all of which, not suiting Mr. Sondes' ideas of strict propriety, he tried the medium of middle-age, and found middle-age the worst evil of the three.

Middle-age wanted to marry him; middle-age thought that where the duties of wife and housekeeper might be so easily combined, it was a pity for one person not to fill the situation; and accordingly spinsters and widows of from five-and-thirty upwards, contended so vigorously for the honour of pouring out Mr. Sondes' tea and working him slippers, that he finally decided on "clearing the house," as he called it, and letting Olivine take her chance.

"She cannot get more spoiled than she is doing," he considered, and I am bound to say Mr. Sondes was right.

The spinsters and the widows — the ladies with curls and the ladies with caps — those with timid maidenly manners and those with more decidedly

business address, were unanimous on one point — viz., in trying to get at Mr. Sondes' heart through Olivine.

To this end flattery and indulgence and over-care and over-anxiety — to this end making the young girl feel there was no one on earth of importance besides herself — to this end compliance with her every wish, endurance of her every little whim, — of a truth had Olivine not been a very angel, a creature almost incapable of being spoiled, she would have been ruined. As it was, when her last toady left the house, she first loaded her with gifts and then smothered her with kisses; and then she and Mr. Sondes rejoiced in their solitary evening, and felt guiltily glad that the last troubler of their domestic peace had packed up her goods and departed, — "spectacles, Roman nose and all," suggested Olivine, — to make some other household miserable.

"How good the tea is," said the girl at breakfast next morning, with a sigh of relief.

"And how fresh the bread and how sweet the butter," remarked Mr. Sondes, slily. And thereupon the pair burst out laughing, and Mr. Sondes wondered to himself why he had endured the governess incubus so long.

"But still the girl must be educated," he considered; and in order to compass this desirable end, he procured the services of a married lady, who consented to give Olivine the advantage of her society for a certain number of hours per diem, while masters attended, and Miss Sondes practised and painted, and read French, and German, and Italian, for all of

which good things, I regret to say, she had not much appetite.

Never a more genuinely idle girl breathed than Mr. Sondes' niece — idle, be it understood, in the matter of learning. She had been so accustomed to do nothing, to sit still, to wander up and down stairs, to play with her pets, to go dreaming about the garden at her own sweet will, that any system with regard to her time seemed wearisome in the extreme.

Further, like some of the sweetest and truest women who have ever breathed, she had no special talent, no great amount of cleverness. Languages were not her forte; for the life of her she could not be made to comprehend why everybody should not speak English, and why people should study the literature of other countries, when there were already, as she opined, too many books published in Great Britain. It was a perfect waste of money and card-board, teaching her to draw; dancing she liked, music she loved.

"If I could only sing like Lawrence Barbour," she said once to her duenna, "I should not care if I could not write my name."

"And who is Lawrence Barbour?" asked Mrs. Martyn Gregory. These were the early days of her engagement, and she had never been favoured with a view of Mr. Barbour's perfections.

"He is a cousin of uncle's partner, Mr. Perkins," answered Olivine; "and he is so clever, and he sings like an angel, and he is going to be married to Miss Alwyn, a great heiress and a wonderful beauty."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Martyn Gregory, who, having sundry little reminiscences of her own, was a very terrier for scenting out the inner feelings of other people.

"Do you see much of this gentleman?" she inquired, after a moment's pause.

"No, not so much as we did when I was a child. He used to be staying with us then. He was with us for months after he nearly got himself killed stopping Miss Alwyn's horse in Hyde Park. He has never sung so much since. He says it tires him; but sometimes, when he is in a very good temper, I get him to sing for me still. It is heavenly," went on Miss Sondes. "I shall be so sorry when he is married!"

"Why?" demanded her companion.

"Because uncle does not like Miss Alwyn; and at any rate, I suppose, she would be much too fine a lady to come here. I remember her paying Lawrence a visit when we were at Grays, and she was the most affected creature I ever saw in my life — would not eat, would not drink, left the flowers I gathered her. I dare say she has forgotten all that; but I have not. Child as I was, I noticed her."

"You are nothing but a child still," remarked Mrs. Martyn Gregory.

"I am turned fifteen a long time," answered Olivine, a little indignantly, "and I look eighteen, so Mr. Forbes says, and Mr. Perkins declares I might be forty. Nobody really thinks me a child except uncle and Lawrence Barbour; and Lawrence only thinks me one because Miss Alwyn is ever so much older than I am."

"You ought not to speak of Mr. Barbour as Lawrence, it is not proper," remarked Mrs. Gregory; whereupon Olivine looked at her in amazement.

"We all call him Lawrence," she said, "Mrs. Perkins, and Ada, and all the children. I never

wish you would seem a tiny bit glad about going, too. I should feel so much happier."

"I cannot go; I told Mr. Forbes so yesterday; it was very kind of him to think of asking me, but I cannot go."

"Uncle says you must, though."

"And I say it is impossible," answered Mrs. Gregory.

"But why — why —" entreated Olivine.

"If you must know why, because I cannot afford to buy a dress for the occasion, and I have not one fit to wear among such stylish people."

"But it would not cost much; uncle says I shall go in nothing except white muslin."

"I could not go in white muslin, though," answered Mrs. Gregory.

"I do not suppose you could," said Olivine meditatively, after she had looked her duenna's ample figure and greyish black hair all over; and she sat and thought out this difficulty in silence.

"I will be back in a moment," she declared at last, and she left the room, and ran down the stairs, and knocked at the door of her uncle's special apartment.

"Come in," he called, and Olivine entered.

"Uncle," she said, coaxingly, "Mrs. Gregory cannot go with us to Mr. Forbes'."

"Why not?" he asked; "she must. I intend her to do so. I shall make it a *sine quâ non*."

"She has nothing to wear," explained Olivine.

"Lord bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Sondes. "Women are all alike: young or old, they never, according to their own showing, have a rag to cover them. If that is the difficulty, however, I will remedy it — she shall

have a dress to-morrow. Now run away, for I am very busy, and you ought to be at your lessons, instead of talking about parties."

"Oh, uncle! parties are so much nicer than lessons!" answered the girl.

"Humph!" said he, "perhaps you may not always think so," and then he put her hair back from her forehead and kissed her, and bade her depart. "Don't let this affair turn your brains," were his last words; and when the door closed behind her, he began wondering if he had done wisely — if he had not better have held to his first resolution, and refused to allow her to go. "But, pooh!" he finished, "the child cannot stay a child for ever; she will have to venture out into the world some day, and better for her to begin while I am with her — God knows how long that may be!" and the man turned his face towards the window, and looked away and away with a changed expression at something he seemed to behold far off in the distance. Then, with a weary sigh, he resumed his occupation, which, when he had finished, he took his hat and went to the city, where he met Mr. Alwyn, who discoursed to him at length about Lawrence Barbour, and Lawrence Barbour's talents and chances of success, till Mr. Sondes wished from the bottom of his heart, he had either never seen Lawrence Barbour, or that Lawrence had never met Mr. Alwyn.

The skein of silk he had once hoped to wind so easily, was now hopelessly entangled, and he could not help thinking about this as he ascended the staircase, side by side with the youth who had disappointed him.

"I bought that dress to-day, pussy," he said to Olivine; "it is a wonder to me women do not back out of Death's invitations by saying they really have nothing fit to be buried in."

Lawrence laughed. "Is the dress for you?" he asked, addressing Olivine.

"No," she answered; "I wish it were, but uncle will not allow me anything more extravagant than white muslin, and I should so have liked a pink silk, with about three hundred flounces, and a quantity of white lace, and lilies of the valley. I was reading in a novel the other day about a lady who had a dress like that, and I thought at the time it was just what I should choose, if I ever had a chance of wearing it."

"Time enough for silks and laces, pussy," answered Mr. Sondes. "When the days come in which such things are suitable for your age, you would give a great deal to be able to return to your teens and white muslin. Do you not think that very likely, Barbour?"

"It is certain," Lawrence replied, with more gravity than the subject seemed to demand; but Mr. Sondes, holding his cup out to Olivine for more sugar, remarked that the young man was looking at his niece with a certain wondering and speculative interest; that something about her which had never struck him before, seemed to have attracted his attention at last.

Two ideas, in fact, had occurred to Lawrence at the same moment; one, that Olivine was not precisely what she had been four years and a half previously; and the other, that possibly Miss Alwyn's desire to see her might not arise from simple curiosity.

"She really is very pretty," decided Miss Alwyn's lover; "and I hope she will dress herself becomingly."

Now the "she" thus mentally referred to meant Olivine Sondes, and not Henrietta Alwyn.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Spring and Autumn.

Long before the evening arrived on which an entrance was to be obtained into fairy-land, Olivine decided that time had a spite against her, and was travelling slowly on purpose.

"I am positive that night never will come," she declared twenty times a day to Mrs. Martyn Gregory, and Mrs. Martyn Gregory, once the question of the dress was decided, refrained from rebuking her pupil for impatience; but rested contented with telling her time would soon pass by and bring the long expected evening on its wings.

"Wings!" repeated Olivine scornfully. "Crutches!" and the young lady declared once more, she thought no time in all her life — none — had ever limped along so slowly.

"What will you do when the party is over?" inquired Mrs. Gregory.

"Oh! do not talk about that," entreated Olivine, looking very much cast down; but next moment she brightened up and said, when it was all over she could think about it.

"Whenever we have a dreadfully wet day in the winter time I sit and think to myself about the summer," she went on; "and it is wonderful how the time

by when I do that; when I put buds on the lilacs, and hang flowers on the laburnums, and imagine the sun shining over the green fields down at Grays. Do you never 'make out' summer in the winter, Mrs. Gregory? I cannot help fancying it is a good plan in the wet days."

And the girl turned her young, fresh, spring face as she spoke towards Mrs. Gregory, who answered —

"It is of the coming summer, not of the past, you think, Olivine."

"And what difference does that make?" asked Olivine.

"All the difference," was the reply, spoken sadly, albeit Mrs. Gregory was neither very sentimental, nor reflective. "If a summer were certain never to follow your winter, if there were no future, in fact, you would scarcely care to look back."

"I believe I should," Olivine answered. "If I were certain never to go to another party I am sure I should like to look back on Mr. Forbes'; and when I am an old woman, with grey — white hair," corrected the girl, fearful of seeming personal — "I shall tell my grandchildren about the night I went to a ball in Limehouse, and wore nothing but a muslin dress, and looked among all the fine ladies a perfect Cinderella."

"My dear, you ought not to talk about grandchildren," suggested Mrs. Martyn Gregory.

"Well, my children then," amended Olivine. "There must be a great pleasure in looking back and talking about the past, or else old people would not keep on telling stories about the time when they were boys and girls. If there never were to be another summer, I should still love to remember last August, and the

month we spent down by the sea. Do you not care to think about when you were a girl, Mrs. Gregory?"

"No," was the answer; "I like to forget."

"How unhappy you must have been," said Olivine, sympathetically. "I do hope the time will never come when I shall like to forget," and Spring folded her hands together and let them lie idly in her lap, whilst she thought about her future; and Autumn looked at Spring and envied her.

Little though the past may have held for any man or woman, still there is something in the mere fact of the greater part of life being gone for ever which causes middle age to look regretfully on very early youth. If the past of middle age have been happy, then it cannot help sighing at the idea of all the happiness that may be in store for youth — happiness which for it, is now a tale of the past and gone. If the early story were, on the contrary, sad, then it is hard to think of the wasted years, the wretched hours, the clouded morning, the darkened noon.

It is the has, or might have been, against the may be, — the certainty contrasting with the uncertainty, the actual result placed side by side with the vague possibility. Autumn knows what flowers the spring held for her, what blighting frosts came to nip the young fresh buds of promise, what rains washed down the formed fruits, what blights fell on her fairest trees, what lightnings came to strike the finest branches in her oaks, what a long cold May was in the season of her life, what an unhopeful June never let the roses in her garden bloom in the sunshine, but bent them down to the earth.

Life, friends, life! after all we are b[illegible] the years

— to one a full harvest and a gladsome summer; to another a barren life, a poor seed time, a sorrowful ingathering — to you, prosperous man, the seven seasons of plenty; to you, oh! stricken one, the seven of famine.

We are but as the years, and let the twelve months of our experience have held what they will for us, we cannot, having lived out our youth, help standing to wonder half enviously what the new year will contain for those, whose light feet meet ours on the threshold, as we totter out uncertainly, into the darkness of age.

It is the night marvelling concerning the new day; it is the man speculating about the boy; the woman considering the possible future of the girl.

Looking at Olivine, Mrs. Gregory's thoughts went back to her own far-away youth; to a remote period, when this century was in its teens, and she about as old, with her hair in a crop, and her waist under her arm-pits, and a dress as wide as her flannel petticoat, and gored up to the waist aforesaid. Those were the days of sacks, and girlish simplicity; of painting on hand-screens, and executing the Cat's Minuet; of early tea-drinkings and family pic-nics; of short skirts, and long whist, and obedience to parents; and those days were gone.

Well, what had they held for her? That was precisely the question Mrs. Gregory was considering as she sat looking at her pupil. They had held Mr. Edwin Lionel Tomlins, of the Grange, Hackney, now Edwin Lionel Tomlins, Esquire, of Park Lane and Lannersly Court, Hampshire. Never did Mrs. Gregory pass through Hyde Park without turning aside to look the house of her former admirer, and thinking of

what might have been. She could have pointed out the very tree in Epping Forest, under the shade of which her papa and mamma, and Mr. and Mrs. Tomlins, senior, and a number of other elderly individuals, in charge of a tribe of sons and daughters, partook of food in that singularly uncomfortable fashion which prevails at pic-nics. She could have shown the spot where she sat, and the place where Edwin Lionel prepared the salad, coming softly behind her to whisper he had "kept a heart for somebody he knew." How beautiful seemed the name of Edwin then; how distinguished that of Lionel; how perfect the result obtained by the conjunction of the two — Edwin Lionel! What a dear, motherly old lady Mrs. Tomlins seemed; and had not Mr. Tomlins, the father of Edwin Lionel, a happy gift of telling stories, and of welcoming young people to his house?

Then Mrs. Martyn Gregory's papa failed in business, and after that somehow they fell out of acquaintance with the Tomlinses. Edwin Lionel married a widow, who brought him a large fortune. She saw the pair driving sometimes about in the Park, and Mrs. Gregory, fat, middle-aged, and destitute of beauty, still keeping to the traditions of her youth, wondered if her old admirer were happy, and, I fear, hoped he had repented him of his mercenary fickleness.

Meantime, after Mr. Tomlins' desertion, his ladye-love fixed her affections on a dissenting minister, who came to lodge in her father's house. There were other men in the world, she discovered, than Edwin Lionel; every one had not married a widow; every person might not be a Mammon-worshipper; like him of the pic-nic and the lettuce heart. Sh[illegible]rish

church, and went to listen to Mr. Crampford; she devoted herself to his temporal interests; she made his tea; she aired his clothes; she toasted his muffins; she warmed his slippers; and at last the young man rewarded her devotion by entrusting her with a secret. He hoped he was soon going to be married.

"Oh! good gracious, Mr. Crampford, you don't say so!" fluttered the young lady, with her face all a-glow, and her heart throbbing a little faster, wondering what was to come next.

Whereupon the handsome apostle informed her he did say so, and that he had been engaged for some incredibly long time, and that the youthful maiden's name was "Lucy," and that her paternal parent had a paper mill down in Kent.

Women, even when just out of their teens, can endure a good deal without flinching from the torture, and the girl to whom this interesting piece of intelligence was communicated stood fire bravely. She congratulated Mr. Crampford, and thanked him for his confidence and laughed at him a little (her cheeks a trifle paler than they had been), and supposed he would not be wanting their first-floor much longer, and felt relieved for her parents' sakes when he said he must ask leave to bring his wife into his present apartments; and then she went to her own room and had a good cry, and decided that she would go and be a governess.

Which she did, and earned enough to help her parents' means for some years, at the end of which time she returned to Hackney and started a school, and made the most of her few accomplishments, till she met with Mr. Martyn Gregory, a clerk in a City bank, whom she married, and who, never being able to

induce the two ends of his small income to meet, was glad of any extra assistance his wife could give him.

They lived in a small house in Bow, with only one parlour, which smelt of Mr. Gregory's pipe. They had but one servant — a little maid-of-all-work. They were the happy parents of a couple of boys, earning a few shillings a week in City offices. They could not have afforded to go out either to parties or theatres — supposing the theatres had been within reach, or a desirable party a dainty ever likely to be pressed upon their acceptance; and yet Mrs. Tomlins was presented at Court, and drove in her carriage through Hyde Park; and Edwin Lionel's name figured in heaven knows how many lists of directors — and he had once gone to pic-nics in Epping Forest with Mrs. Gregory!

As for Mr. Crampford, he was a burning and a shining light in a chapel west of Regent Street, and his wife Lucy sometimes came to see Mrs. Gregory in her brougham, and brought with her grown-up daughters, dressed in the height of the fashion, one of whom rumour said was likely to marry well.

Little wonder on the whole, perhaps — though the life was neither an interesting nor a romantic one — that Mrs. Gregory should look on Olivine with a vague feeling of envy, with a terrible longing for the past to come back again, and give her a chance of a better future — of a vague future, at any rate, like that stretching forth before the girl, instead of the dull cold certainty through which she now walked in the autumn of her existence, day after day.

As for Olivine, with her pretty hands idly folded together, she sat thinking about her future — about that vague, uncertain time which yo[illegible]r

can become a reality — about sorrow, about trouble, about change, about all the coming years might bring.

She had said, "I do hope the time will never come when I shall like to forget," without considering the full sense of her words; but, after the sentence had passed her lips, its meaning struck on her ear and made her reflect.

Trouble she had never known, care she had never felt, unkindness she had never encountered. As the years went by, and she grew old, would she come to have a history like other people? would she ever suffer like women in stories? would anybody she loved die and leave her? would her uncle? —— and at this point, which was the only vulnerable place in all her armour, (so she then thought), her eyes filled full of tears, and the tears slowly trickled down her face and fell upon her dress.

"Olivine! Olivine! what is the matter?" asked Mrs. Martyn Gregory, returning in a moment from her mental journey.

"I was only thinking about all you were talking of," answered Olivine; "and it came into my mind that if — if — if —"

"If what dear? Now, do not cry, there's a good girl. Only remember how angry your uncle would be, were he to see you. He would imagine I had been scolding, and —"

"I was thinking about him," sobbed Olivine. "If he died — before me — oh! Mrs. Gregory, what should I do?"

"For mercy's sake! child, how did such an idea ever enter into your mind? Your uncle is no more likely to die than I am."

"And how long do you think you will live?" asked Olivine, who took this piece of consolation literally.

"I never know what to make of you, Olivine," returned Mrs. Gregory, severely. "You have the most singular ideas, and the most singular mode of expressing them, of any girl I ever met with in the whole course of my experience. I never can tell whether you are in jest or earnest about anything."

"That is precisely what Mrs. Perkins says," answered Olivine; and she resumed her lesson with the air of a person determined to afford no cause for future speculation. But she continued thinking out her problem in silence.

In good truth Mrs. Gregory was right. Olivine had curious ideas, and the faculty of occasionally expressing them inopportunely. She was a girl who never seemed satisfied with the surface of anything, but who liked to get to the bottom of the commonest matters.

She had lived so isolated a life, she had mixed with so few people, she had such a narrow range of vision, that necessarily within that range her sight grew keen and sharp beyond what is usual at her age. Perception and reflection were both unduly developed, and the trifles she noticed and the deductions she drew from what she saw, made her appear to some people, as Percy Forbes declared, "delicious."

But to others the sharpness of Miss Sondes' faculties afforded no such unbounded pleasure. Mrs. Perkins pronounced her "the cunningest most old-fashioned creature I ever see;" and Mrs. Gregory herself was sometimes at a loss to decide whether

sophisticated or satirical, whether she seemed odd, "because she thought all she said, or said all she thought, or because she did neither." "I should like to understand you, miss," was the idea that passed through governess's mind as she sat and watched Olivine poring over her book. "You are no more like what I was at your age than day is like night; and I cannot comprehend you in the least."

Which was the less to be wondered at, perhaps, as most women of Mrs. Gregory's stamp find it very difficult indeed to make even a guess at the characters of women dissimilar to themselves.

"I wish she were not going to this party," decided Mrs. Gregory as a finish to her mental reflections. "She will be certain to say or do something wrong, and then Mr. Sondes will be equally certain to blame me."

But in this idea Mrs. Gregory chanced to be mistaken; nothing Olivine was likely to do or say, could have seemed wrong in Mr. Sondes' eyes. Nature to him did not seem so terrible a monster as it appeared to his niece's governess. Art was not so great a good to this man as to make him desire its acquisition at any price — at the price of innocence and simplicity, of self-forgetfulness and perfect truth.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Mr. Forbes' Party.

ROUND and about and inside Reach House, everything was in a state of bustle and confusion. Servants were rushing hither and thither; gardeners were arranging flowers; solemn waiters, who had so far unbent as to take off their coats and work in their shirt-sleeves, were unpacking hampers and laying out piles of china and pyramids of plate. Every window in the house was open to admit the faint breeze which blew off the river; the caps of the maid-servants were all awry; outside the close wooden gates were collected the young Arabs of Limehouse and its vicinity, who lustily cheered each cart which arrived on the scene of action; down on the shore were tribes of barefooted urchins, with trousers tucked up to their knees, who having tried hard to climb the high bank, piled and protected with wood, which served alike to keep off intruders and to resist the encroaches of the river, now contented themselves with wading out into the gravel and mud, and so obtaining distant views of the house and garden. Some few had managed to sneak into the shipyard, and, lying snug among logs of timber and portions of old vessels, kept their eyes on the hampers and baskets, on the servants and the decorations. Across the Thames lay Deptford and Rotherhithe; with the afternoon sun shining upon them, the pleasant Surrey hills seemed scarcely a mile distant; up and down the river went stately ships, and busy tr[illegible] steamers, and the strange craft of all

right was the great city, with a golden haze over it, to the left no land could be seen save the coast-line of the Isle of Dogs, with the Thames skirting round it. Above the trees towered the masts of the vessels in the ship-building yard; the grass on the lawn was as green as though the sun never shone upon it; and, lounging on one of the rustic seats, overlooking the river, was Percy Forbes, the only idle individual on the premises, who lay there with his feet over the end of the bench, and his head supported by his hand, while he contemplated the scene before him and speculated whether his party would go off well or ill, and whether his guests would be satisfied or dissatisfied with their evening's entertainment.

Lounging there, watching the sun shining on the river, and bringing the far-away hills close almost to the opposite side, raising himself on his elbow to scrutinise the build of this barque and that brig, taking his cigar from his mouth at long intervals and knocking the ash off leisurely and deliberately — Mr. Forbes was thinking of many things beside his party; of his past, of his future; of business; of pleasure; of Lawrence Barbour and Miss Alwyn; of all the girls who were coming to his house that night — young, and pretty, and fashionable.

"I wonder if I shall ever like another girl well enough to marry her," he began to consider finally. "I certainly was very fond of Hetty," and then he fell to marvelling how Miss Alwyn would come arrayed, and whether she would be the best-looking woman in the room. He had not seen her armed for conquest for a long time, and having once admired her, it was impossible for him to avoid speculating concerning her

beauty still. He ran over all the dresses he had ever beheld her in, pink and amber, and white and black; he tried to decide whether she would come in a toilette severely simple, or ravishingly elaborate; whether she would have the contents of a conservatory on her head, or wear her tresses unornamented; whether she would strive to break hearts by her cold cruelty, or turn heads by her fascinating graciousness; whether she would make herself generally agreeable, or be set down as a haughty beauty.

"I hope to heaven," finished Percy Forbes, as he rose and strolled towards the house, "that there will be some one here able to try a tilt with her."

He did not wish Miss Alwyn less beautiful, he only desired to see some one as beautiful; he wanted to behold a race on the ground; he earnestly trusted Miss Alwyn would have something else to do beside walk over the course at her own sweet will.

He knew enough of her to be well aware it was a matter of uncertainty whether she would elect to come in a dress close up to her throat, and utterly destitute of ornament, or in clouds of tulle, wreathed and garlanded with flowers. Most other women he could hazard a guess concerning, but Miss Alwyn was uncertain and changeable as the wind; and it was because it made him angry to see her confident of success in any attire that Mr. Forbes hoped so heartily she might find for once there were other girls in the world as attractive as herself.

"If Olivine Sondes were a few years older, I should not mind backing her against Miss Alwyn," he thought, while he stopped and lighted another cigar. "I know fifty prettier girls, more showy and more able to make

much of themselves than she will ever be, but still she possesses something which might make Hetty fearful of winning the day. What a nuisance it is she is such a chit of a child still. What eyes the girl has — wonderful eyes:" and Mr. Forbes turned back to the river walk, and took a look up and down the Reach as if he saw something in it which reminded him of Olivine.

"What a child it is, and I have promised to dance with her, and all the grown-up young ladies will think I am committing a sin. She is too young to come to such a gathering. I wish now I had accepted her uncle's refusal, and left her with her governess and her pets. Poor little thing, what a life it is; what a life!"

Child though she was, many people that day were thinking more about Olivine than her scarcely sixteen years had a right to expect. As a matter of course, Mr. Sondes could not avoid wondering what kind of *début* his little girl would, in her small way, make; and Mrs. Gregory likewise felt naturally anxious that Olivine should neither say nor do anything calculated to disgrace her instructions for ever in the eyes of genteel society. Nurse Mary, long since promoted to the position of maid and housekeeper, proudly declared that, dress or no dress, she knew her child would look as well as the best of them; and was secretly disgusted because Mr. Sondes resolutely refused to allow his niece to wear any of her mother's jewels on the occasion.

"She may have a diamond brooch to fasten her dress," he said, "I see no objection to that; but she shall not

go decked out like a married woman of forty. Either as a girl or not at all, Mary!"

As for Lawrence Barbour, with the entire of his heart and soul he hoped Olivine would look her best and be prettily dressed, because he intended to devote himself to her. Greatly to his chagrin, a Mr. Gainswoode had lately been almost domesticated in Hereford Street; at first as a friend of papa, but at last as an admirer of Miss Etta.

He was as old as Methuselah, as ugly as sin when the freshness has worn off it, as rich, report said, as Rothschild, and as much in love with Miss Alwyn as Lawrence himself.

Perfectly well my hero knew what the result would be, and yet this battle he was resolved to fight out to the last. He would try to rouse Miss Alwyn's jealousy. If Olivine were but a child, still he knew she was old enough to cause Etta some anxiety.

He would take Mr. Sondes' advice, and bring the beauty to a decision. He would not be the Alwyns' lackey any longer, driving outside their carriage through that "cursed neighbourhood," as he said to himself, in order that Mr. Gainswoode might sit next Etta, and Mr. Alwyn be enabled to leave room for his daughter's flounces.

Those were the days of flounces! Ye gods! had not Miss Alwyn a profusion of them! Was not she dressed in some indescribable material that seemed to envelop her as in a haze of light fleecy clouds? When she alighted from the carriage there was a glimpse to be obtained of a white satin skirt, and when she stood in the tiring-room, with an admiring lady's-maid touching flounce and fold as if she loved the material, d'

not Miss Alwyn look as though somebody had been pelting flowers at her flounces, which stuck on her dress here, and there, and everywhere? Yet she had not a flower in her hair save a white rose; down her back the black curls wreathed and twined themselves; over her shoulders streamed the coarse, hard, wonderful hair — over her shoulders, which were white as snow, smooth as polished marble.

She had but the one rose, as I have said, amongst her hair, but she wore flowers in every other available position. They knotted up her short sleeves; they lay among the folds of her lace *berthe;* they were here, there, elsewhere over the flowing skirt, looping up the flounces, nestling beneath the light flowing material. She had plain gold bracelets on her arms: she had a jewelled fan in her hand; she carried a bouquet in a cornucopia studded with precious stones. Altogether, Miss Alwyn was got up regardless of expense, and so Olivine decided, when standing not far off, she contemplated this wonderful beauty with mixed feelings of envy and admiration.

In the glass Miss Alwyn beheld the girl's face reflected — beheld the veil of soft dark hair covering her head, her white unornamented dress, the brooch glittering and changing as the rays of the evening sun fell upon it, the round young arms, the pure clear skin; and turning sharply, she saw after years, Olivine Sondes once more.

For a moment the two stood looking at each other, while the maid still continued her loving toil.

"You are Olivine Sondes," said Henrietta, holding out her hand.

"And you are Miss Alwyn," answered Olivine, tak-

ing the hand proffered, not with any great warmth or enthusiasm.

"I saw you looking at my dress, and I thought I remembered your face."

"I was wishing I had a dress like it," replied Olivine, wholly ignoring the latter part of the sentence, and then Miss Alwyn swept out of the room, followed by the girl, feeling that, after all, she had not attired herself in vain.

"The child is really very pretty," she said to Lawrence Barbour; "and if I were you I should not let Percy Forbes marry her."

"I do not intend," answered Lawrence, and straightway he crossed the room and devoted himself to Olivine; who, thinking such attention beyond her deserts, prayed him not to stay with her while the dancing was going on.

"It amuses me so much to look at them; but Miss Alwyn will be wanting you," she said, and would have forced him to go but that Lawrence was determined to stay.

"So you are there, Barbour," exclaimed the host, at length; "why on earth are you and Miss Alwyn not dancing?"

"I think Miss Alwyn is engaged to sit," answered Lawrence, significantly.

"Why don't you dance with Miss Sondes, then?" demanded Percy.

"Do you dance?" asked Lawrence, eagerly, turning to her; and on Olivine answering "Yes," he engaged her for the next set with more earnestness than Mr. Forbes considered at all needful under the circumstances.

"Remember, you are not to forget me," he said, as he went off laughing; and when Lawrence asked Olivine what Mr. Forbes meant, she laughed too, and told him all about how she came to be there at all, and of how good Mr. Forbes had been to her.

"I would not have missed seeing the ladies' dresses for anything," she concluded. "I think the whole place is just like fairy-land. And there is the moon rising," she added; "how lovely it is!"

"Come," exclaimed Lawrence, "and see how the moon looks on the river;" and regardless of Mrs. Gregory's gestures of disapproval, Olivine suffered him to lead her from the room and wrap an opera cloak round her, belonging to some one who frequented operas doubtless, and lead her down the side walk towards the Thames.

"We have not seen very much of each other lately, Olivine," he said.

"No," answered the girl; she was looking across the river at the lights on the opposite side, and thinking of what a happy evening it was, and of how thoroughly she had enjoyed herself: "and I suppose we shall see less of you when you are married."

"God knows whether I ever shall be married or not," he replied; he was thinking of Miss Alwyn's new admirer, and wondering whether Henrietta had noticed his defection.

"You must not keep my niece out in the evening air, Barbour," observed a voice behind them at this juncture; and Olivine was forthwith taken in charge by her uncle, while Miss Alwyn, possessing herself of Lawrence's arm, began to accuse him of all sorts of

crimes and shortcomings as they walked, a long way behind Mr. Sondes, back to the house.

"So, sir! when you told me you were studying chemistry, and trying experiments, *la belle* Sondes was the true cause of your absence from Hereford Street," she said, tapping him with her fan.

"Two can play at the same game, Miss Alwyn," he answered; and the pair continued their walk in silence.

From that moment the beauty never lost sight of Olivine during the whole evening. Any one looking at the two might have thought Olivine had come matronised or patronised by Miss Alwyn — that she owned no separate existence of her own.

To Mr. Gainswoode, Henrietta introduced the girl specially as "a particular friend of Mr. Barbour," and when Olivine blushed, Mr. Gainswoode and Etta looked at each other significantly and smiled.

"This is Miss Sondes, papa," said Henrietta, with that engaging manner which was one of her chiefest charms, and thereupon Mr. Alwyn "God blessed himself," and first declared it was impossible, and then observed he always knew she would turn out something remarkable, and finally, after paying her a multitude of compliments, observed she need not care about anything an old fellow like himself said to her.

"If you please, sir," asked Olivine, at this juncture, "may I stay with you? for I do not see my uncle, and I am afraid of being left alone."

Which speech was wrung from her in a very extremity of dread lest Mrs. Perkins and Ada, whom she

saw nodding to her from distant regions, should come and claim acquaintance, and carry her away to earth from heaven; but Mr. Alwyn did not view it in this light at all. He only saw "little Sondes" had grown up into a very pretty girl, and felt rather gratified by her preference.

"On my word, a most discreet young lady," he said, as he led her for the second time out of the crowded rooms down the garden walk. "Won't you come and see my daughter, my dear, in Hereford Street? You know my daughter, don't you? — that young lady with the flowers and ——" Mr. Alwyn here made a fluttering movement of his hands to represent her flowing attire.

Fact was, various circumstances had tended to make Mr. Alwyn very happy and very hospitable during the course of the evening. At last a suitor had come to whom money was no object — to whom fortune was not a necessity. With all his heart he hoped Mr. Gainswoode would propose to Henrietta; with all his heart also he hoped Lawrence would, at the proper time, transfer his affections to Olivine; and he had, on the strength of these hopes, drunk a good deal of sherry and of champagne, and was in a very comfortable state of mind accordingly when he spoke to Olivine.

"You are such a pretty girl, you know," he said, "and have such an extraordinary manner. You ought to marry Barbour, poor fellow; he will never do any good if some woman does not take pity on him, and he is so lonely, and so peculiar, and so clever. I should like to advise you as a friend," went on Mr. Alwyn; "marry Barbour; he will make a far greater

figure in the world than Percy, though Percy is a confoundedly nice fellow, and has a devilishly nice place. Think of what I say, my dear, and don't throw yourself away on him." And Olivine's white dress gleamed in the moon-light, and the diamond brooch flashed and glittered; and she thought within herself, the evening was turning out a little differently to the evening she had anticipated.

CHAPTER XXIX.

At Reach House.

Every country has its Juggernaut! Under the wheels of the car which bears triumphantly fame, pleasure, or wealth, through the world, the multitudes fall willing sacrifices to their god. Differently, according to their religion, they advance to meet their fate. Dancing and light-hearted they hurry on to join the cavalcade, or with a great rush head the forlorn hope, or with careworn faces, burdened by title-deeds, weighed down by money-bags, they come forward to worship and to suffer; and if this be true in a general sense with regard to nations, how much more true is it of those different grades and classes in society that go to make up nations. What will people not suffer in the cause of gentility! — your pardon, Madam, for the use of a word so offensive to your ears — what agonies of dress, of deportment, of conversation, are not endured daily for the sake of that Christian Juggernaut? This is a matter in which one class cannot laugh at another; this is the common land of English society, where plebeian and patrician meet, where plain "Mister" cannot sneer at "My Lord," nor "Her Grace" at the wife of an Alderman.

All of us in our turn have stretched ourselves on this social rack. The dreary dinners, the wet pic-nics, the never-ending evenings, the purposeless tea and the

amateur musical parties, the morning calls, and the afternoon callers — you who endure these things, ask your own souls if you do not feel the while that you are offering up your time, your patience, your talents, your health, on the shrine of that god whose votaries refuse even to give him a name.

What will Robinson not bear smilingly to-night for the pleasure of mentioning to his next-door neighbour to-morrow that he dined last evening with Lord Bon Ton, and met Etcetera, and somebody else, and a few people besides. To this statement Jones, having no idea that a lord is not a daily form of refreshment with Robinson, never suspecting that genteel society makes his acquaintance about as comfortable as a sea voyage, listens deferentially, and goes home to say casually to the country cousin who is visiting his wife, and employs herself much with crochet-work and mysterious frillings, "I came down in the same carriage with Robinson; quite a man of the world, dines with Lord Bon Ton, and meets Etcetera, and all the rest of that set; very pleasant fellow is Robinson; *we spent a delightful evening at his house last week!*"

Note the connexion of ideas, the links in the social chain; see how one man is hanging to another man's skirts, how in the great business of gentility every person is trying to borrow capital of his friends and acquaintances, striving to push a connexion — endeavouring at all hazards to drive a trade.

Where is the man who has never wondered to himself as he made his way home in cab, on foot, or in brougham, from ball, or dinner, or conversazione, what made him go out at all? — to whom it has r——

occurred that he could have passed a few hours much more satisfactorily in bed, rather than in listening to simpering common-places in crowded rooms? And yet the next night finds him labouring away on the tread-mill of fashion once again, working out the term of his sentence of social servitude, — for that Juggernaut, whose way lies through splendid drawing-rooms, who, well-disguised, presides at the meetings of so many societies, who gives dinner-parties of his own, and has a temple in every street, insists upon his victims having their wits crushed out of them, and the victims, wise and foolish, obey.

Whose assemblies are so crowded as his, — whose guests are so scrupulously punctual, — whose country house is so full of wearied visitors, whose at-homes are so faithfully recollected as those of Juggernaut the genteel? Have not his priests honour, have not his votaries faith? Where is the Colenso who shall venture to question the accuracy of his Mosaical books? who that desires to enter into his Heaven shall murmur about enduring much tribulation to compass that object? The car moves on, and the worshippers fall prostrate, and the people cheer, and applaud, and honour.

It is quite possible for us to hold two religions — one for this world and one for the next — we may not serve two masters at the same time, but we can try to serve them separately. Just as excessively religious people, who believe implicitly and think much and talk much about a future state, in which all men shall be equal, are oftentimes the proudest and most disagreeable of beings in this life; so those who so loudly declare there is nothing abstractly in a name, are

usually greatly influenced by names and titles in reality, and would suffer much to get inside that inclosure with which divinity doth hedge a king.

Such was the case with the Limehouse notables, at all events; a gossip in Mrs. Perkins' bed-room, a comfortable bit of supper rendered more palatable by the aroma of the soap works, in Mrs. Jackson's parlour, a bowl of punch at Doctor Reddy's, or clay pipes and discussions, philosophical, democratical, and radical, at Mr. Churchwarden Hills', would have been much more to the taste of Mr. Forbes' neighbours than the feast to which he bade them repair. What pleasure could Mrs. Hills, for example, derive from her new satinet in an assembly where no one directed looks of envy at her, or said, "O law! Mrs. Hills, what a dress!" or fingered the purchase and guessed at its value; what charm could there be to Doctor Reddy in a company ignorant of his conversational abilities, and perfectly indifferent as to whether such an individual as himself existed; what were ices and trifle, wines and jellies, to a man like Mr. Hartfield, the proprietor of the United Saw Mills, who loved his hot steak and his pint of stout every night at "half-past nine o'clock reg'lar, better nor all your late dinners, and French kickshaws."

Mrs. Hills' idea of a successful party was certainly not that of one where "you could not see the pattern of the carpet." She liked a few friends comfortably. She did not approve of "those crowded rooms where you got the clothes tore off your back, and were ready to faint with the heat, and everybody was pushed on one side that the young ladies might go spinning rou the room with their beaux like teetotums."

Doctor Reddy and Mrs. Hills had subsequently

an harmonious duet about this matter. The doctor was of opinion that low dresses, hot rooms, open windows, iced water, confectioner's pastry, champagne, excitement, and late hours, would soon convert England into a lunatic asylum and a churchyard. Mrs. Hills did not wonder men were afraid to marry, when women dressed like the young ladies at Mr. Forbes'.

"Which I am sure more resembled fairies, as they went a-strolling out into the garden in the moonlight, than honest flesh and blood. Wives and mothers, indeed! I could as soon fancy a sperrit bringing up a family as one of them."

But, spite of all this dissatisfaction, not one of those invited from the neighbourhood had courage enough to stay away, excepting Mr. Perkins, who said —

"No, thank you, Mr. Forbes, all the same; but such grand affairs are out of my line altogether. It is very kind of you to want me to go, but I had rather not. I am a plain man, and should feel like a fish out of water among all your fine acquaintances. I'll stay at home and take care of the children, if the missus likes to go and see the show."

The missus went accordingly, in a cab with Ada, Mrs. Jackson and Sophia Anne, Mr. Jackson (after Lawrence Barbour's fashion) occupying a seat on the box.

So many carriages had never found their way to the Isle of Dogs before. It was like "a going to Court," Mrs. Perkins remarked, putting her head out of the cab-window, and looking up and down the street. Pulling it in again next moment, she rebuked Ada for thrusting her curls out of the opposite window,

and told her to sit still and behave herself, and not toss her hair.

Once inside the house, Mrs. Perkins and Mrs. Jackson commenced speculating on what the affair would cost, — whether the flowers in the hall were lent, — and if the confectioners would take back what was left from supper.

"I never did see so many people together before, except on a Lord Mayor's Day," observed Mrs. Perkins.

"Nor I," replied Mrs. Jackson, "only once, when I had to go into Giltspur Street very early, and forgot there was a hanging at Newgate till I found myself in the middle of a great crowd, with my shawl pulled round, and my bonnet in fifty different shapes."

"Oh! my; did you see it?" asked Mrs. Perkins, the "it" referring to the execution.

"No," answered Mrs. Jackson. "I never was so frightened before or since. If I had been going to be hung myself, I don't think I could have fought harder to get out of the crowd. Ain't this a pretty place? I wonder if there is any young lady here Mr. Forbes would like to bring home to it? I was just a-saying, Mr. Forbes," she added, addressing that gentleman, "I wish it was in honour of your marriage we was gathered together."

"I wish it were," he said, with that gay, cheery manner which gained him so many friends. "But all in good time. No doubt there is an excellent wife in training for me, if I could only find out where."

And he went away laughing, while the Limehouse notables grouped themselves together, and criticised the company, and made disparaging remarks on the personal appearance of the West-End ladies; and decided

that their own clergyman was "stuck up" because he shook hands with several persons in the room with whose very appearance, had he been Christian and humble minded, and carried what he preached into practice, he could not have been acquainted.

"Ay, it's all very well," said Mrs. Hills, "but sermons is one thing and conduct another — precept may be good in its way, but doing will travel farther;" and the lady shook her head over Mr. Mallory's shortcomings, and observed that "though Hills was churchwarden, still England were a free country, and she for one would not be tongue-tied in it for nobody."

As a rule the West-enders were very sociable and agreeable. To them the party was a most unformal affair, and they flung themselves into the spirit of it heart and soul. Their host had told many of them that he intended to have the tribes of the East at his house as well as the inhabitants of the West, and no one took exception to his scheme. On the contrary, very fashionable ladies and good-looking young men took a delight in discoursing to the singularly dressed individuals who stood apart like a peculiar people gazing critically on the company.

One old chum of Percy's made Mrs. Jackson's life a weariness to her by reason of his petitions that she would dance with him, and when she would not dance he remained with her talking about the opera and the theatres and the last concert and the latest novel.

In return Mrs. Jackson favoured him with a full, true, and particular account of the Beaumont Institute, of a school treat she had gone to at High Beech, and a run she and Mr. J. had taken a few days previously to Gravesend.

"It is not very often he can get away from the 'boiling,'" she remarked; "but a little outing like that is good for both of us."

"Forbes, do tell me what that woman's husband boils," entreated his friend a few minutes after. "I never spent such an evening in my life. I never had so much amusement, and it is not quite fair, for I fear your Limehouse celebrities are being bored to death."

"If Forbes would only have followed my advice and served brandy-and-water to them all round at first, instead of tea," observed Lawrence Barbour, "you would not have seen many symptoms of weariness."

"A capital idea; one that might be adopted with advantage even west of Charing Cross. When I give a party, I shall procure some rare *liqueur* and try the experiment. But now, Forbes — oh! he's off! You can tell me, Mr. Barbour, who that girl is with the head — she, I mean, in the blue silk trimmed with scarlet — who keeps turning round and round as though she revolved on a pivot?"

"That is a Miss Perkins, the eldest daughter of one of my employers," answered Lawrence, a little bitterly.

"Then you know her? introduce me, and I will ask her to dance."

"No, don't," said Lawrence, "she is such a forward piece of vulgarity. The niece of my other master is here, I will introduce you to her if you choose, for she is both pretty and sweet."

"Prettiness and sweetness are lost on me," answered the other. "Pray enable me to make acquaint-

"Well, for my part, I thinks she looks better to-night nor I ever thought she could look," remarked Mrs. Jennings, who was charmed at the opportunity of differing from Mrs. Perkins. "She is the making of a very pretty woman, as my father always maintained; and she couldn't have chosen anything to suit her as well as white, which the diamond brooch lights up. They are real diamonds — I know they are, because I asked Mr. Sondes, and I am sure he would not tell an untruth about such a matter."

"Then I am ashamed of you," exclaimed Mrs. Jackson; and there ensued a side skirmish between the pair which was interrupted once more by Mrs. Perkins entreating them to watch her Ada, whose half-year's dancing had not been, so the fond parent remarked, "money thrown away."

"She is the life of them," continued Mrs. Perkins. "I only wish her par was here to see her. That is the rector's niece as Lawrence Barbour is dancing with now. If looking was food, she would get her supper off Ada to-night!"

"Who that had the chance of looking at your daughter could avoid doing so?" said Mr. Forbes, who caught Mrs. Perkins' observation as he passed the group, and paused to answer it. "I assure you I consider Miss Perkins has created quite a sensation," and Percy looked gravely in Mrs. Perkins' face, without — so Mrs. Jackson subsequently assured her husband — "a smile on his own."

"Really, Mr. Forbes," declared the soap-boiler's wife, "I thought I saw you at the other side of the room a minute since. You are quite iniquitous" —

which compliment the host acknowledged by a bow, whilst Mrs. Perkins eagerly interposed with —

"Is there nobody to dance with Olivine Sondes? She has been standing this last hour, I think, talking to Mr. Alwyn and the gentleman, whoever he is, that came with him. She is looking now like patience on a monument."

"Yes, but Mr. Alwyn, at whom she is smiling, scarcely represents grief," replied Mr. Forbes. "Miss Sondes prefers not to dance. I engaged her a fortnight since, and now she tells me she is tired and prefers standing. Fickle, like the rest of your charming sex, Mrs. Jennings!" he added, turning to Sophia Anne.

"How I do hate such ways," exclaimed Mrs. Perkins, indignantly. "If I caught my Ada serving any one so, I would walk her off home on the instant. Tired, indeed! Airs and nonsense!"

"It is not every one, however, who has the exhaustless energy and vivacity of your daughter," remarked Mr. Forbes, which observation restored the mother's equanimity.

"He may well say that," she burst out, when he left them. "It must be pleasant to him to see a girl as is a girl, and not a pale-faced statue, with great eyes, and hair like a thunder-cloud, looking as if she had risen from her grave, and come out to spoil everybody's enjoyment. Only see how Ada's partner is laughing — how pleased he seems. Ah, she could keep a room-full going, as I often tell Mr. Perkins. She is the very model of what I was at her age. I hope she will never have to go through what [illegible] mar has had to put up with," — and Mr

stood on tip-toe while she spoke, in order to catch a better view of her younger self, who, leaning on her partner's arm and giggling ecstatically, was indeed a sight to behold.

As she had been a forward, fat, light-haired, snub-nosed, porky kind of a child, so she had grown up into a forward, light-haired, snub-nosed, meaningless-expressioned girl, who laughed loudly, incessantly, and senselessly, and who had a way of flinging herself about, which may, for aught I know to the contrary, have been intended to express vivacity, and a certain consciousness of graceful ease, and absence of all embarrassment.

She wore her hair in curls, of course; not in such curls as Miss Alwyn affected, but in short tiers, which gave the idea of a succession of sandy-coloured sausages being arranged round her head. Any person who was favoured with a private view of Miss Perkins in her bedchamber, would have discovered that this arrangement of her coiffure by day was due to about five hundred little knots into which her hair was screwed overnight. Rows and rows of paper then adorned her head; blue paper, brown paper, white paper, newspaper, were called into requisition to bring Miss Ada's locks into a proper state of curliness, and when these were unrolled and the hair arranged in what Mrs. Perkins considered a becoming style, the girl was an apparition to marvel at. What her fan proved to Miss Alwyn, those curls were to Miss Perkins; something to toy with and employ her hands; now the ends were coming out; straight ends that had to be tucked up into the sausage-roll again; then the combs became loosened, and had to be re-adjusted; anything more like a mop than Ada's head

after dancing could not well be conceived, except that a mop, made of light rags and ornamented with a bow of red ribbon, would have been infinitely her superior in point of picturesqueness.

Her dress was short (are not the gowns of all such girls curtailed for some mysterious reason?) and her petticoats were many; she had shoes which were a little inclined to wearing down at the heel, as Lawrence could see, for, as of old, Miss Ada's legs and feet were rather conspicuous than otherwise. As for the blue silk, how had it not been altered? it had been cut down in such a manner that the girl's neck looked like something completely separate from and having no connection with the remainder of her body. It was tight round the top, and before the evening was over had to be stitched together by one of the maid-servants, who, to avenge herself on Ada for her sauciness, sewed a piece of the skin up with the lace tucker, causing the sufferer to shriek in agony. Her arms were exactly like Castile soap; here white, there blue, there red; generally mottled, and with a development of bone at the elbows which seemed unreasonable, considering the plumpness, not to say thickness, of her figure. Further, she wore a coral necklace, had a red sash streaming behind, ill-fitting gloves, the fingers of which she employed herself in biting when her hair did not require her attention, so that altogether Miss Perkins conveyed the idea of a young lady who was slightly demented.

Every social gathering contains, it may be concluded, its apple of discord for some one; and Ada Perkins was certainly one of those apples of discord to Lawrence Barbour that night. Had he ever studied Job, after the fashion in which he poured over Gmelin

he would have found a whole commination service ready to his hand for use on the occasion. As matters stood, however, he had to fall back on his own resources, and out of them he produced a litany for Miss Ada's benefit. Go where he would, he still beheld that girl clasping her partner's arm, swinging on it, and treating him to domestic revelations which made the man almost scream with laughter. In the supper-room matters came to a climax; there Lawrence saw Ada drinking champagne like iced water, and stuffing tarts down her throat as though she had a design of fattening herself up for market.

Where Mrs. Perkins might be, Lawrence could form no idea; but he decided on stopping Ada's performances, even at the cost of a considerable amount of annoyance to himself.

Very dexterously he made his way to the point where the pair sat, and reached them just as Mr. Trellin was about to replenish Miss Ada's glass.

"Pray do not," Lawrence whispered to him; "she has no idea of what you are giving her; your mamma wants you, Ada," he added, aloud, "shall I take you to her?"

"Bother mamma," exlaimed Miss Ada, tossing her head and shaking all the ends out of her curls, and rendering the position of her combs anything rather than secure; but she rose for all that, and graciously accepted Lawrence's proffered arm, asking Mr. Trellin if he were not coming too.

"I have left Miss Sondes, will you kindly take charge of her?" interposed Lawrence; "that young lady in white on the other side of the table; thank you,"

and he hurried Ada out of the room, and was crossing the hall in search of Mrs. Perkins, when Mr. Sondes touched him on the shoulder.

"I will take Miss Perkins to her mother," said he; "you may trust her to me."

Half an hour later Mr. Sondes came to where Lawrence was standing outside one of the open windows.

"You are a good fellow, Barbour," he began, "and I am glad to see you do not forget that although Mrs. Perkins is an ignorant fool, her husband is as honest, and straightforward, and true a man as ever breathed."

"I could not endure to watch his daughter making an exhibition of herself," answered Lawrence, who was secretly delighted at such praise from his employer. "I wonder if those Alwyns are ever going home," he added, "or whether they expect me to pilot them safely out of Limehouse, as they expected me to pilot them into it."

"Miss Alwyn wants to set Olivine down in Stepney Causeway," observed Mr. Sondes.

"She is very obliging," said Lawrence; "I wonder if Mr. Gainswoode would sit on the box, to make room for Miss Sondes."

"But I am going to take her away now," continued Mr. Sondes; "I think she must have had enough of it by this time."

"Too much, if she be of my mind," answered Lawrence; "I never felt so tired in my life," and the young man sighed wearily.

"You will have to choose between business and pleasure before very long," were Mr. Sondes' parting words, ere he went in search of Olivine, whom he found

talking to Mrs. Lewin, and promising to spend an evening with that lady before she left Reach House.

"That is, if uncle allows me," she said, turning towards Mr. Sondes, who replied that he should make no promises till he saw how she was after her unwonted dissipation.

"Must not I bid Miss Alwyn good-night?" asked the girl, as her uncle bore her away out of fairy-land.

"It is not necessary," he answered, but Miss Alwyn had no intention of "being cheated," as she said, in such a manner, and came running after her.

"Good-by," she murmured, in her tenderest tones; "good-by — *au revoir;* it really is very unkind of you, Mr. Sondes, to tear your niece away from us."

"Too bad, positively," chorused Mr. Gainswoode, "cruel to an extent."

"After all the pretty things we said to one another, to desert me!" finished Mr. Alwyn sentimentally. "Good-by, Miss Sondes. I trust you will treat your next admirer better."

"Never mind papa's nonsense, Miss Sondes!" exclaimed Miss Alwyn; "only remember you are to come and see me; if you do not I shall come and see you; is not that a threat?" and she squeezed Olivine's hand and said, "Good-by, you sweet little thing," and made Mr. Sondes forget his prejudices for a moment, and think her positively pretty.

"You will allow her to come to Hereford Street, will you not?" she asked Mr. Sondes.

"We must talk of that when you pay Olivine your promised visit," he answered, for which speech he could have struck himself next moment, when Miss Alwyn retorted —

"You have thrown down the glove, and I accept it. Expect to see me in Stepney Causeway, for I shall surely appear there," and she touched the top of her fan with her lips, and made him a pretty gesture of farewell, and permitted him at last to go home, feeling Miss Alwyn had the best of the game.

"A wonderfully clever woman," he considered; and then, turning to Mrs. Gregory, he asked her how she had been amused.

"I never enjoyed myself so much in all my life before," said the poor lady, and then both remained silent for a moment, seeming to expect some remark from Olivine.

But Olivine remained silent. She offered no observation; she made no comment on the evening's proceedings, but sat back in the carriage with her face in shadow, while the moonlight shone on her white dress.

"And did the play answer your expectations, Pussy?" inquired Mr. Sondes, after that expectant pause.

"Yes, uncle, quite," she replied; "it more than answered them," she added, after a second's hesitation.

"What makes you speak so dolefully, then," he said, trying to get her out of the shadow, and so obtain a glimpse of her face.

"I am tired," was the answer, and the girl drew back a little further into her corner.

"You must get to bed and have a long sleep. No lessons to-morrow, or rather to-day, Mrs. Gregory; you will both require a rest after this night's exertions," and Mr. Sondes laughed and seemed in such excellent spirits that Mrs. Gregory thought, if he would only go a little more into society, he might develop into something perfectly charming.

"I do not think, child, the evening has turned out so pleasantly as you expected," remarked the governess to her charge, when they stood together in the room which had been prepared for Mrs. Gregory's reception.

"Yes, it did," answered Olivine; "but I am so tired, I cannot talk about it now."

And with that she kissed Mrs. Gregory and flitted upstairs to her own apartment, where she sat down in the moonlight, and cried as though her heart would break.

END OF VOL. I.

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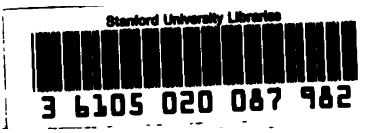

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